

VIDYASAGAR

Such was his mastery over Sanskrit that the Sanskrit College of Kolkata conferred the title 'Vidyasagar' on its young student. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) went on to become the principal of the same college. As Inspector of schools, he established several schools in Bengal, particularly for girls. He simplified Bengali to make it easy for the common man. He is thus regarded as the Father of modern Bengali prose. A gentle crusader, he championed the cause of women. Through his efforts, widow remarriage was legalised, and restrictions were placed on child marriages and bigamy, that were then widely prevalent.

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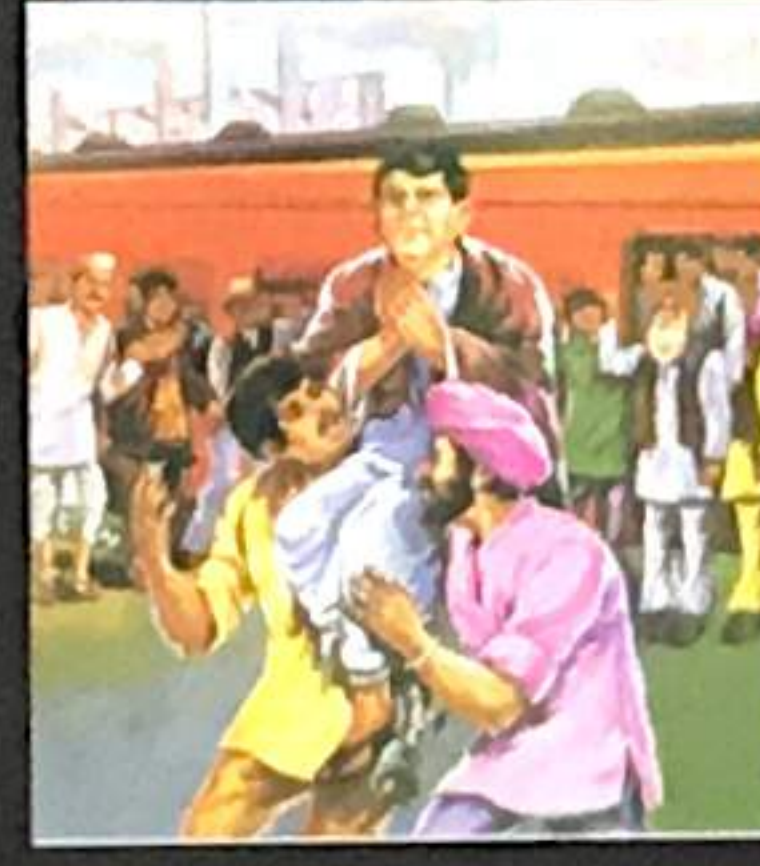
BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR



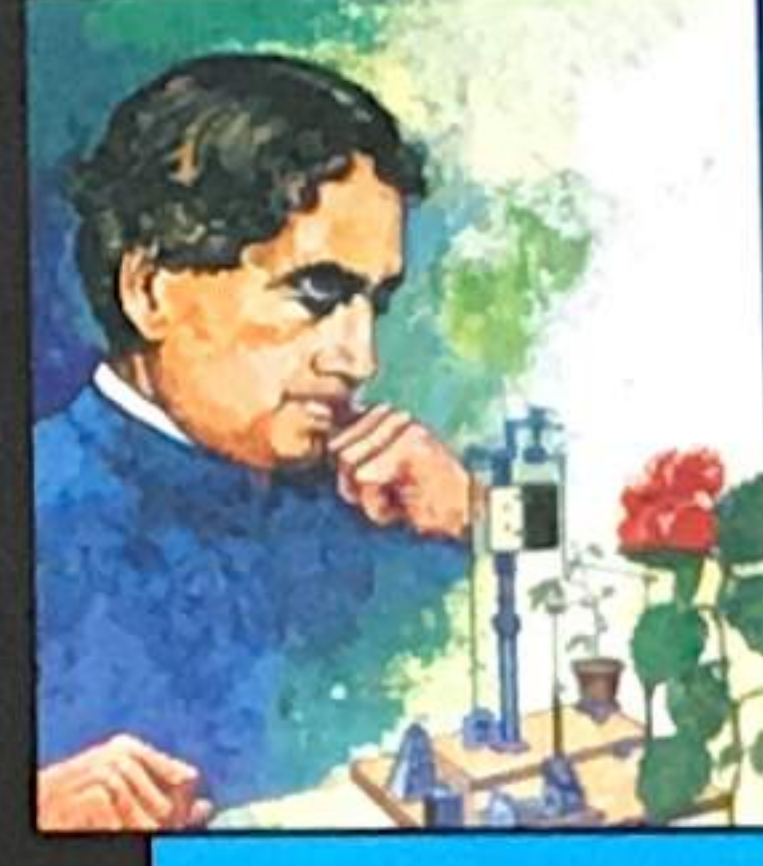
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JAGADIS CHANDRA BOSE



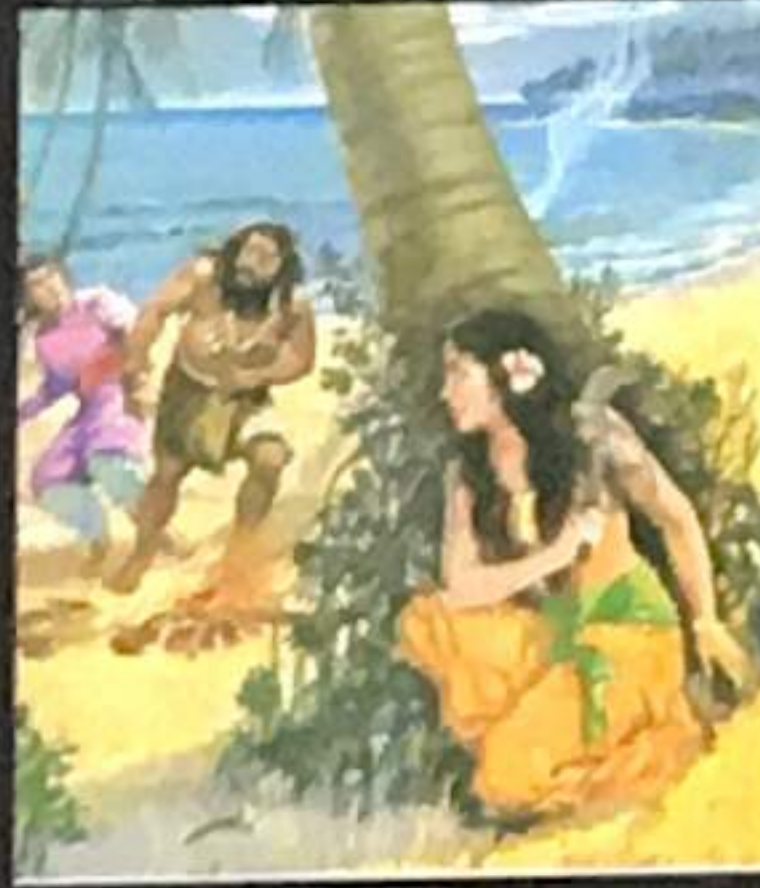
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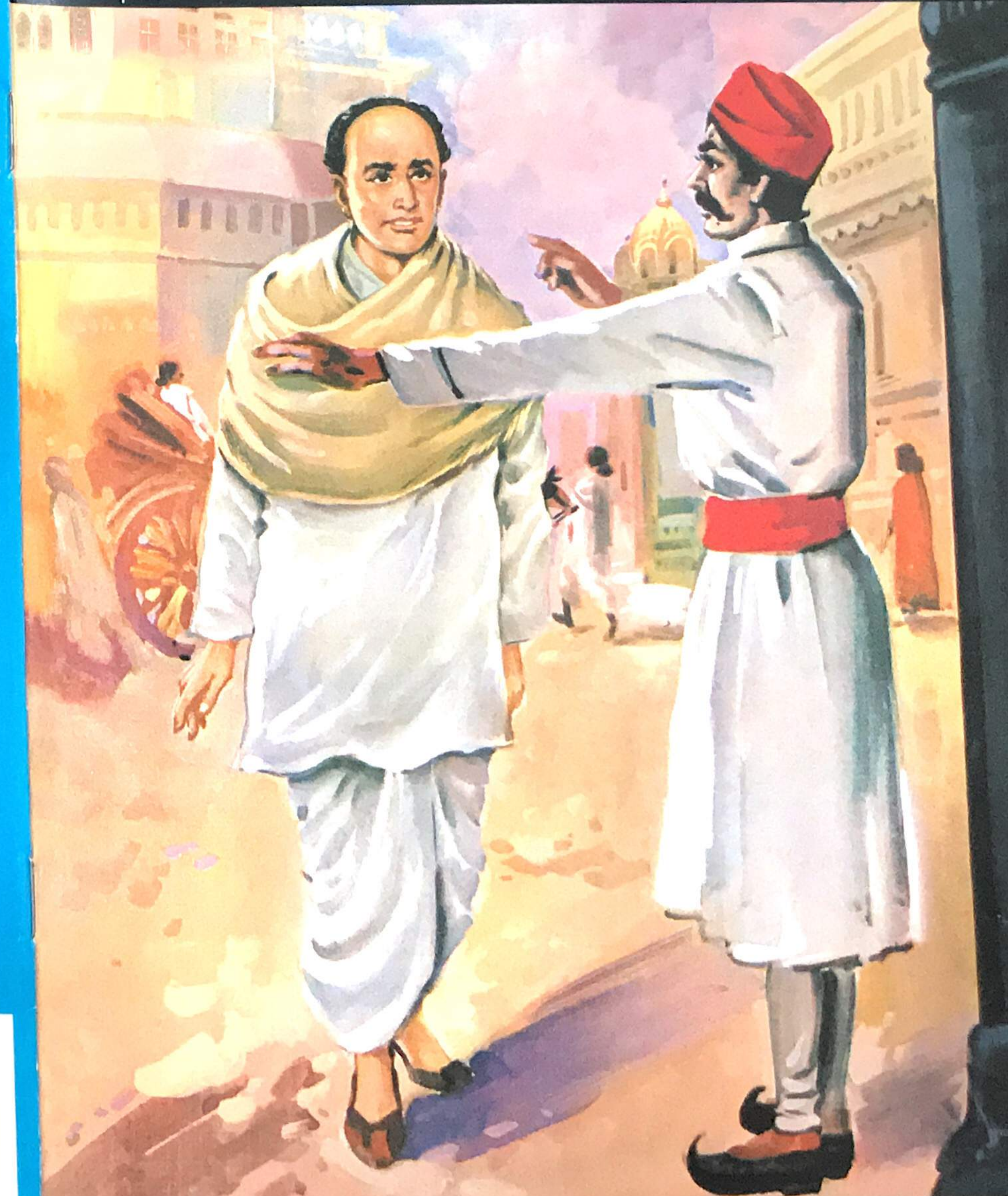
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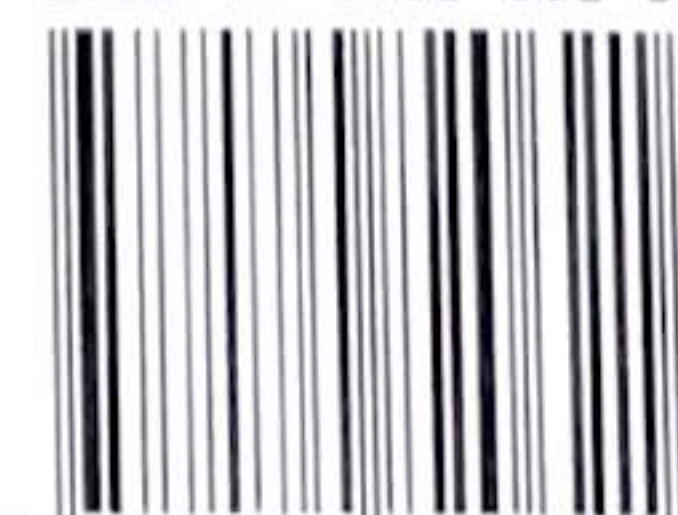
VIDYASAGAR

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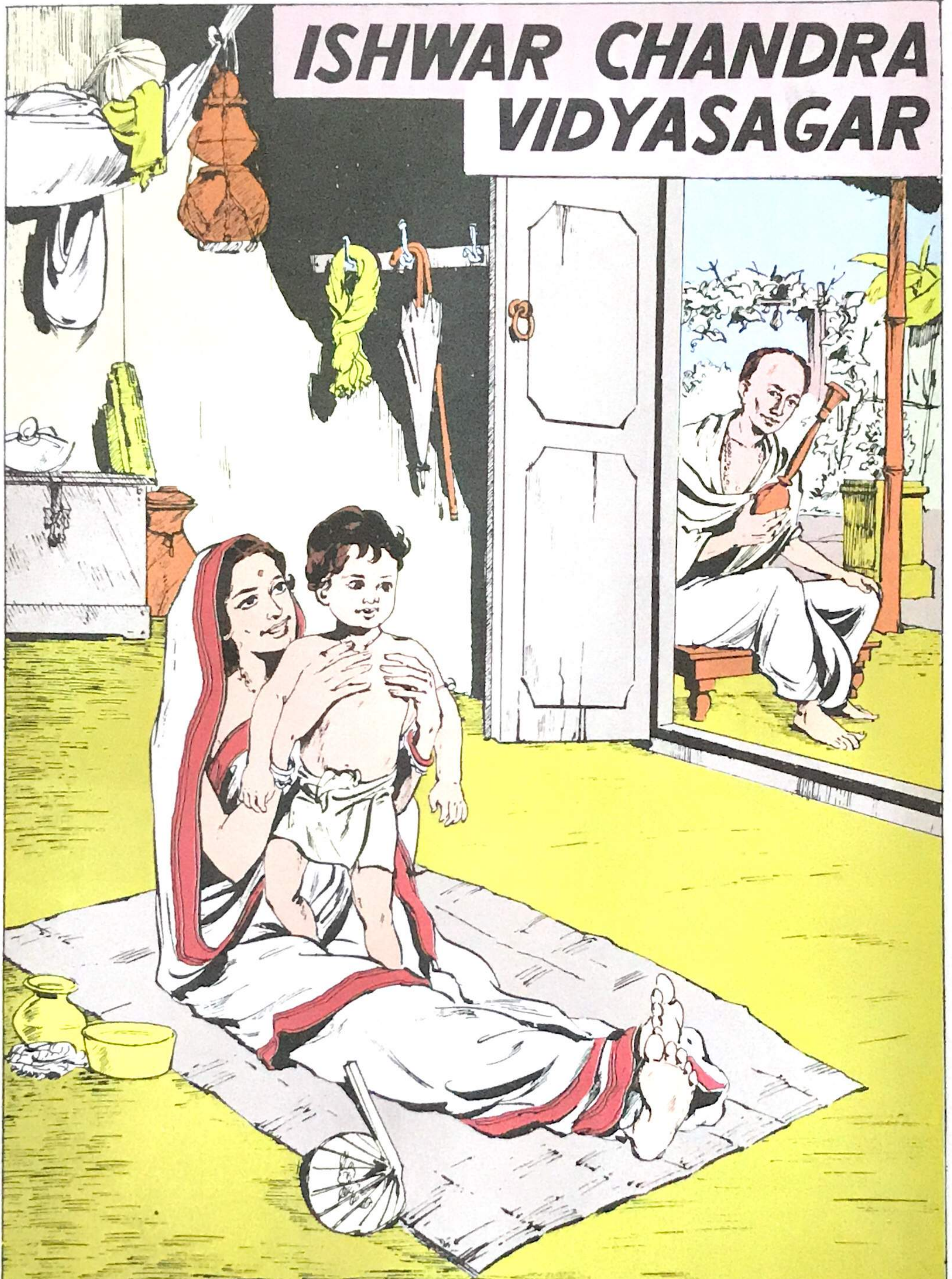


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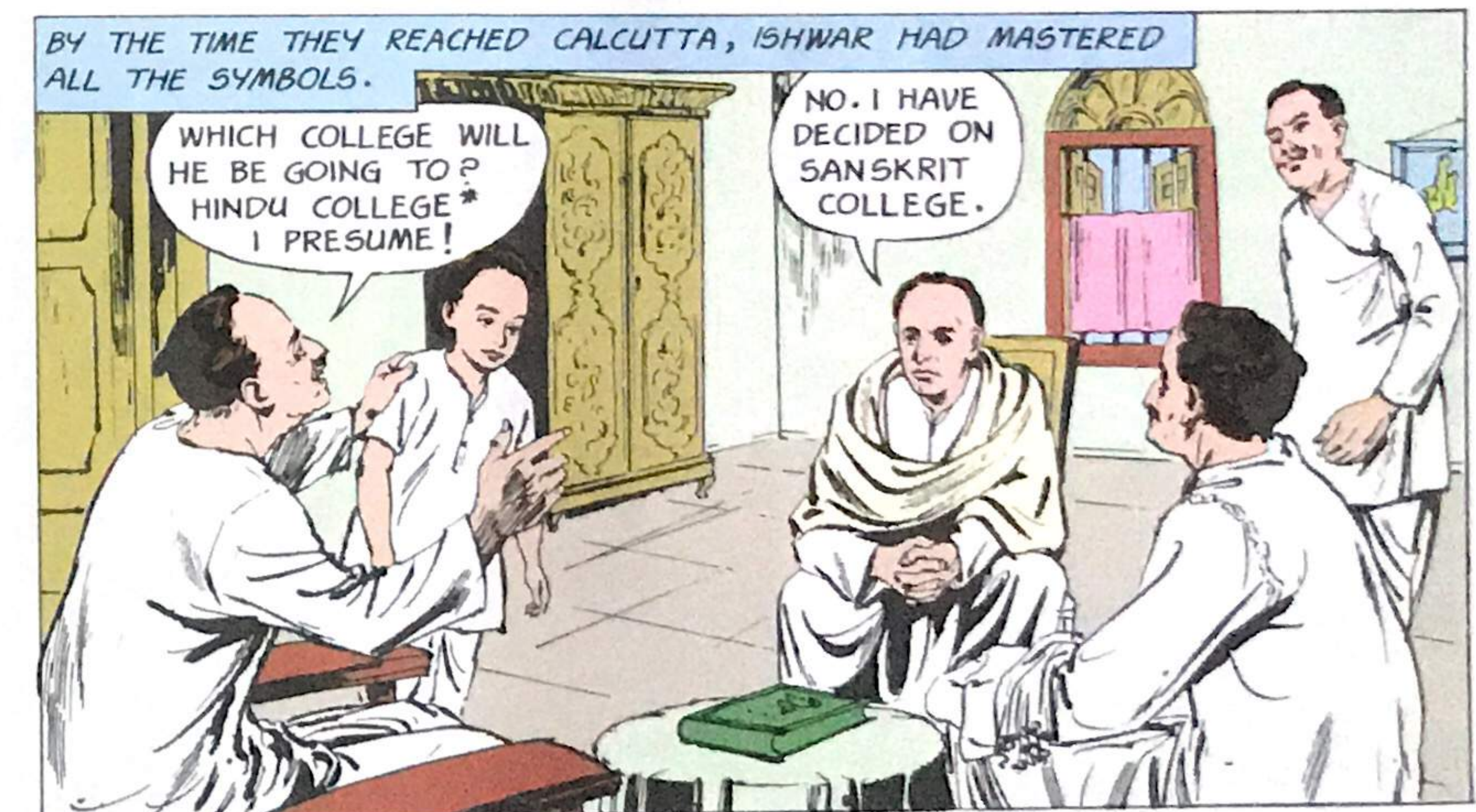
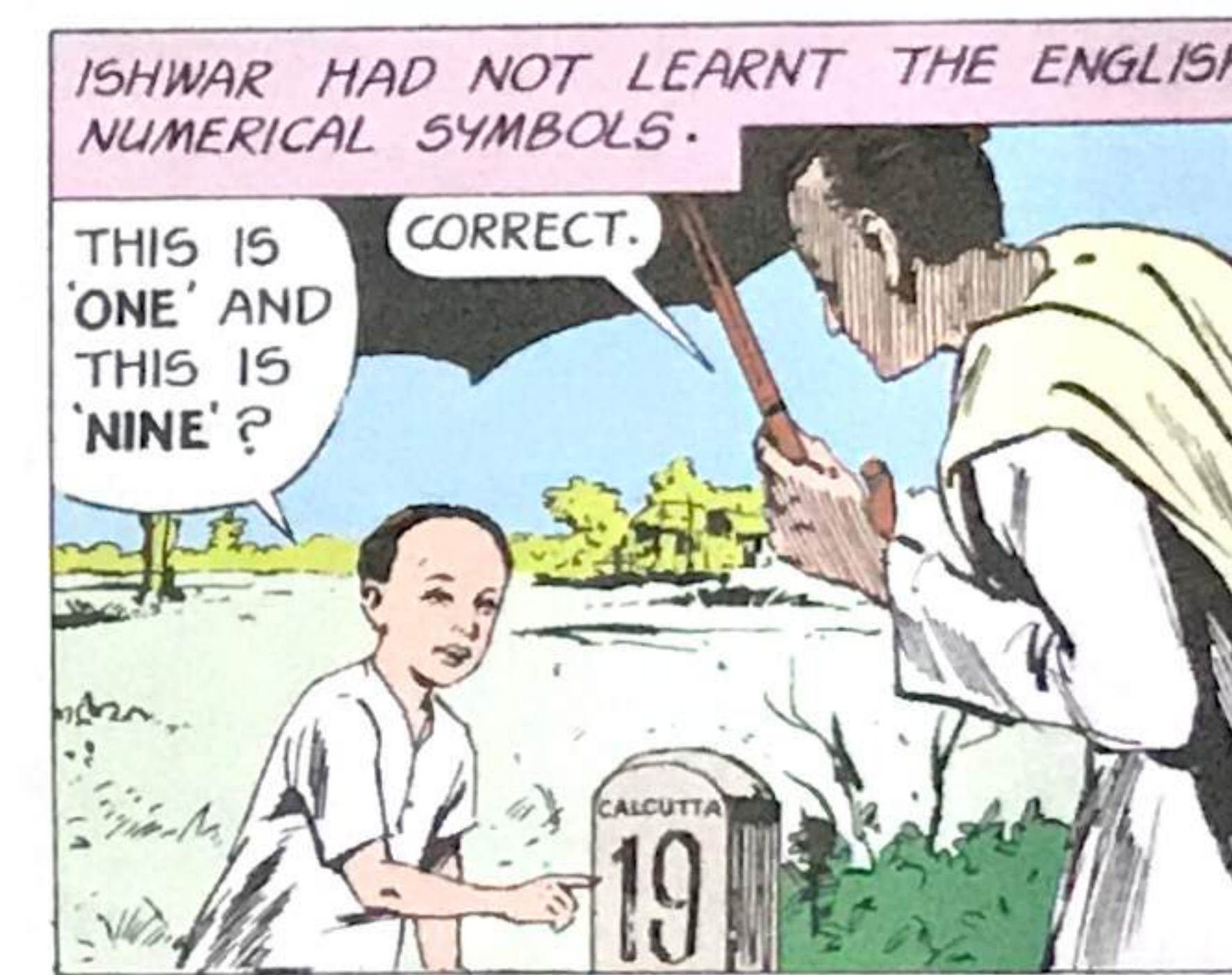
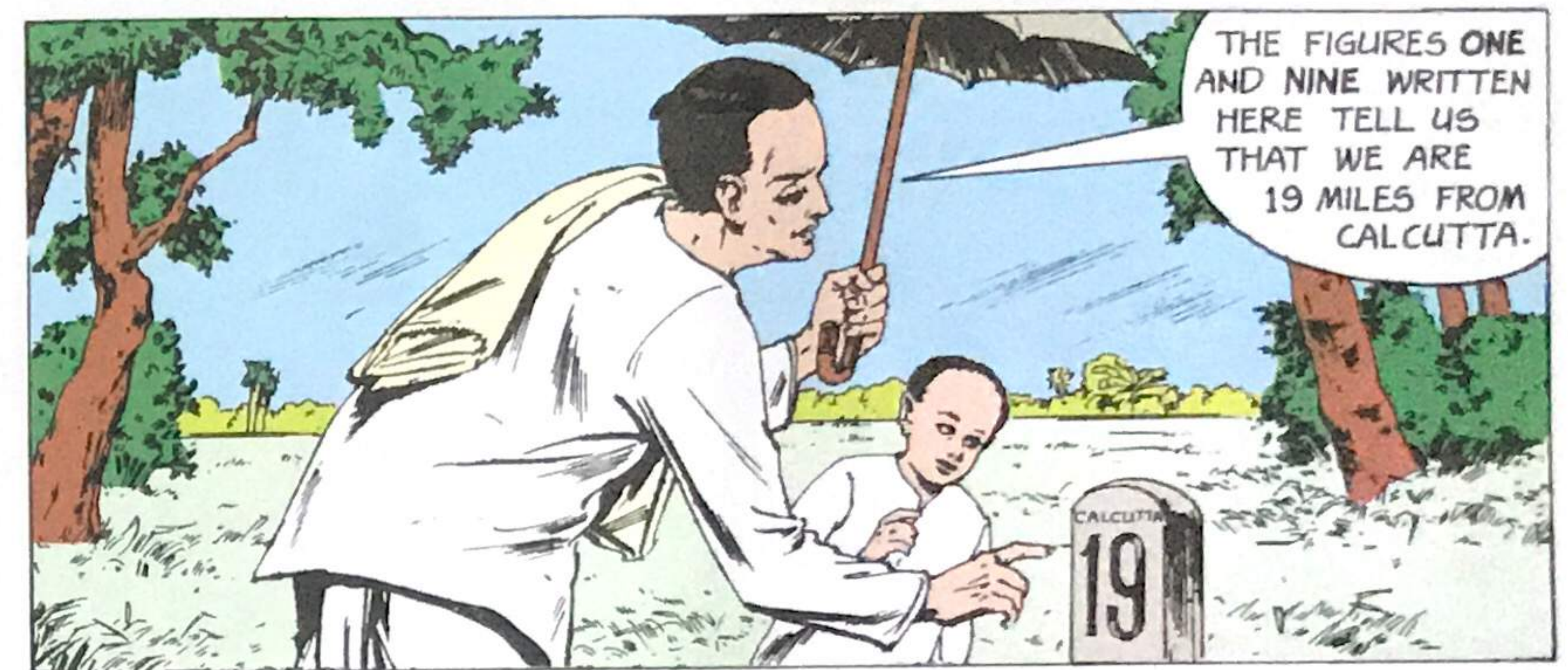
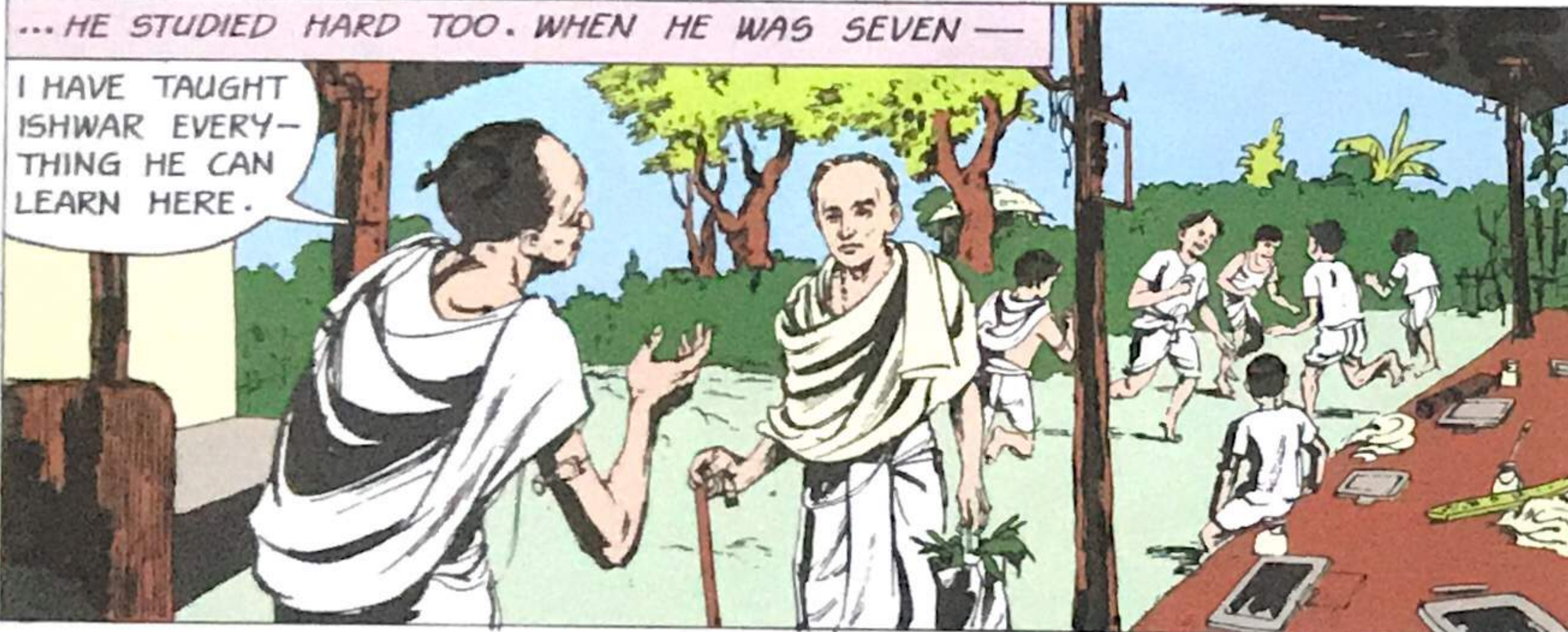
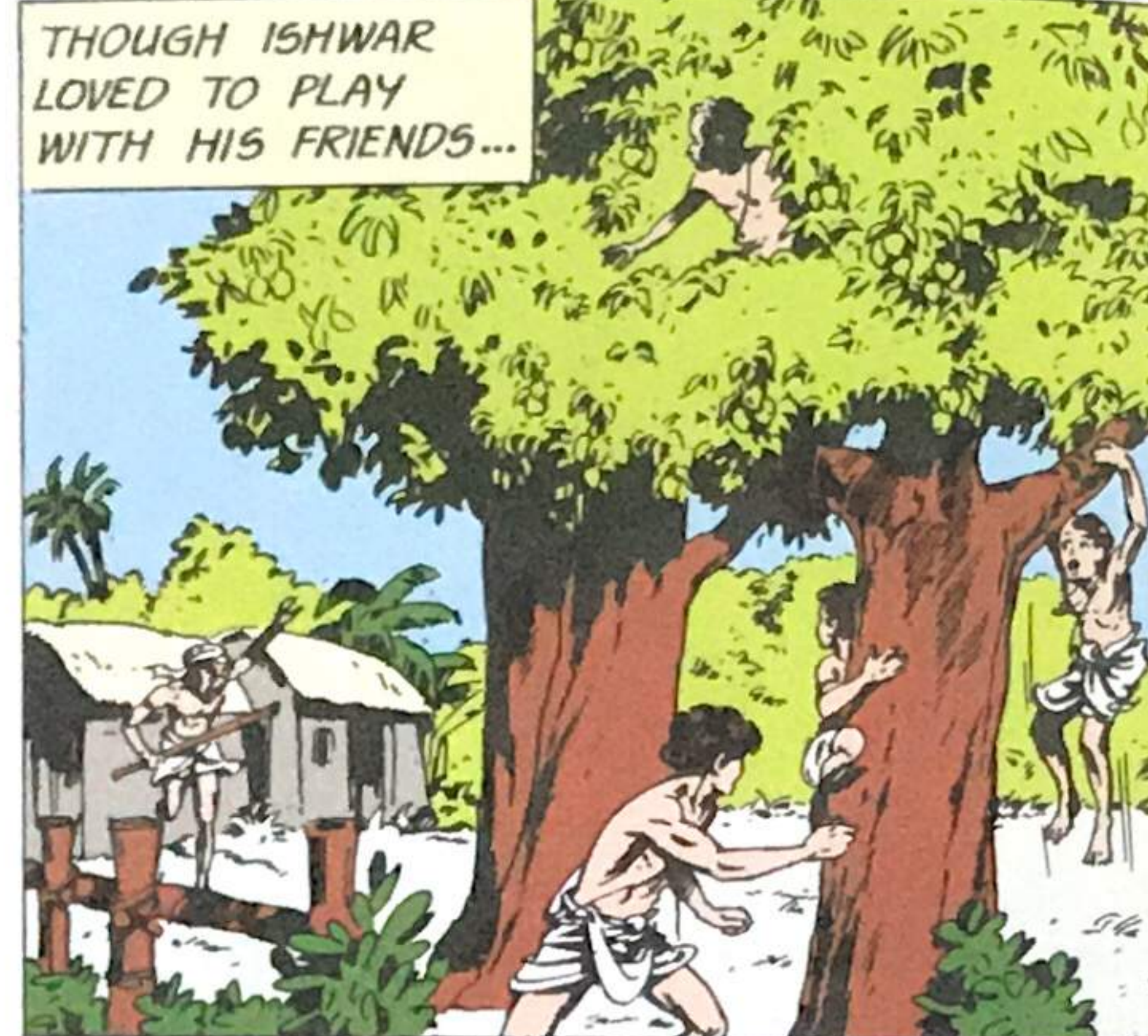
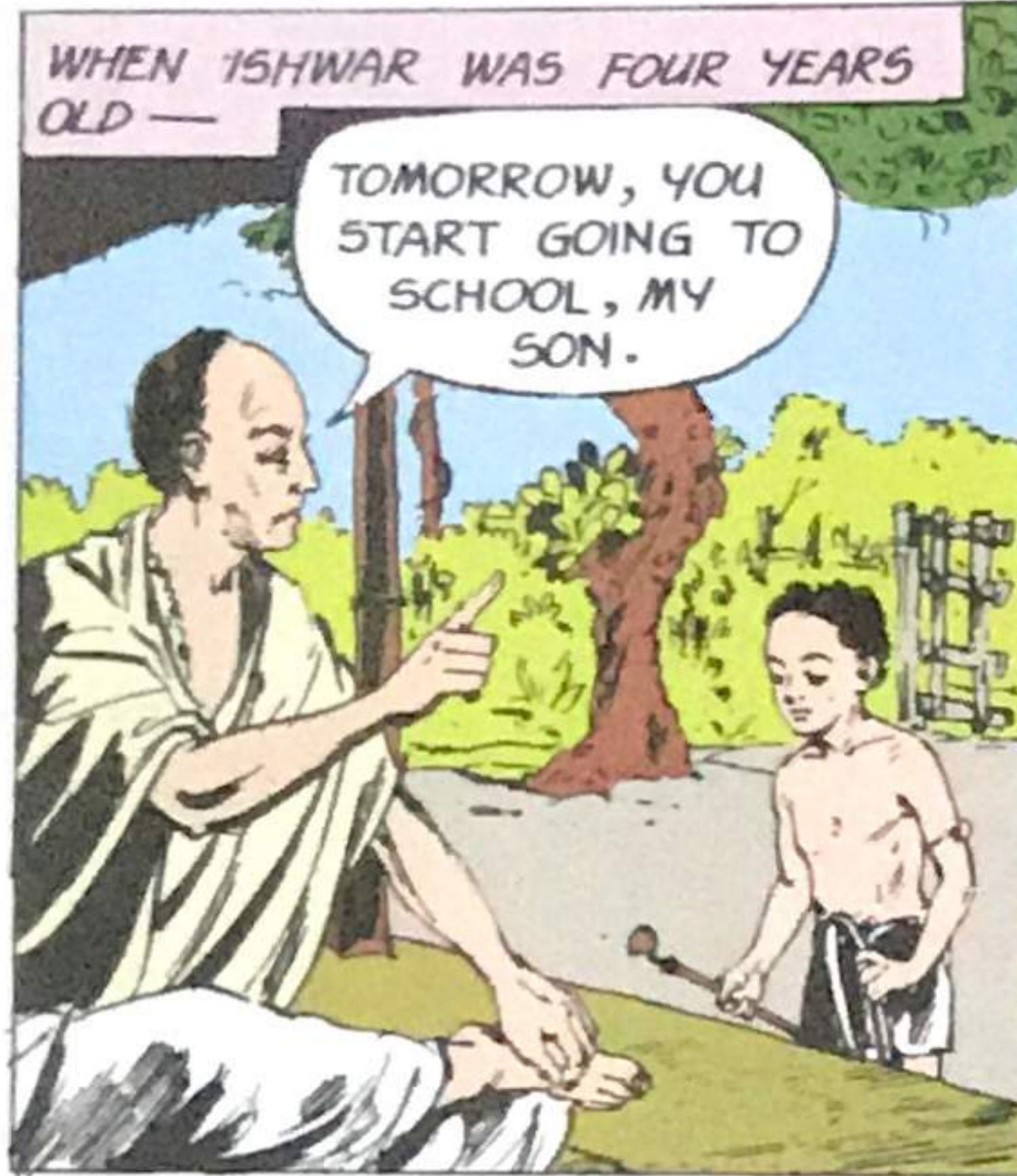


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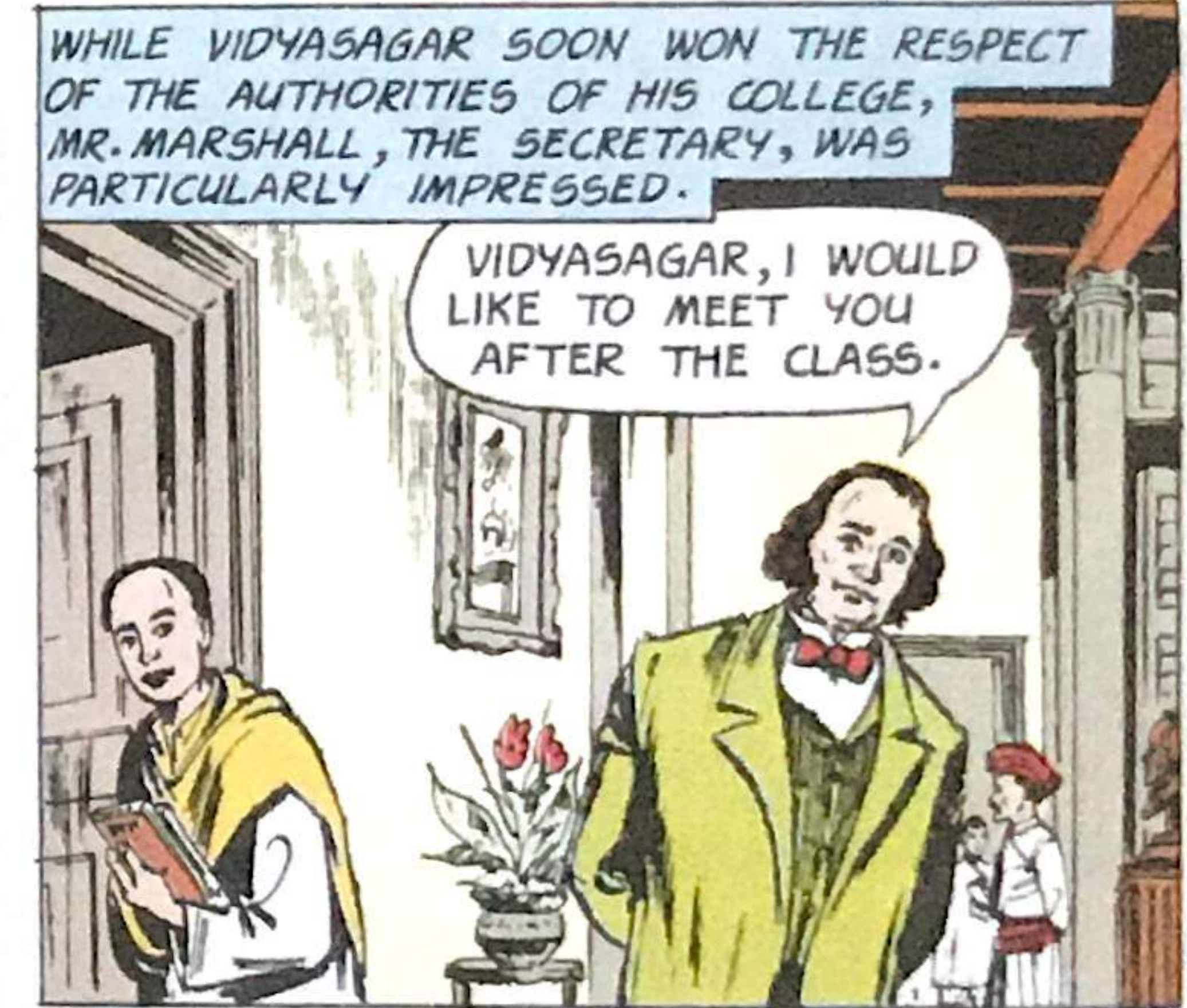
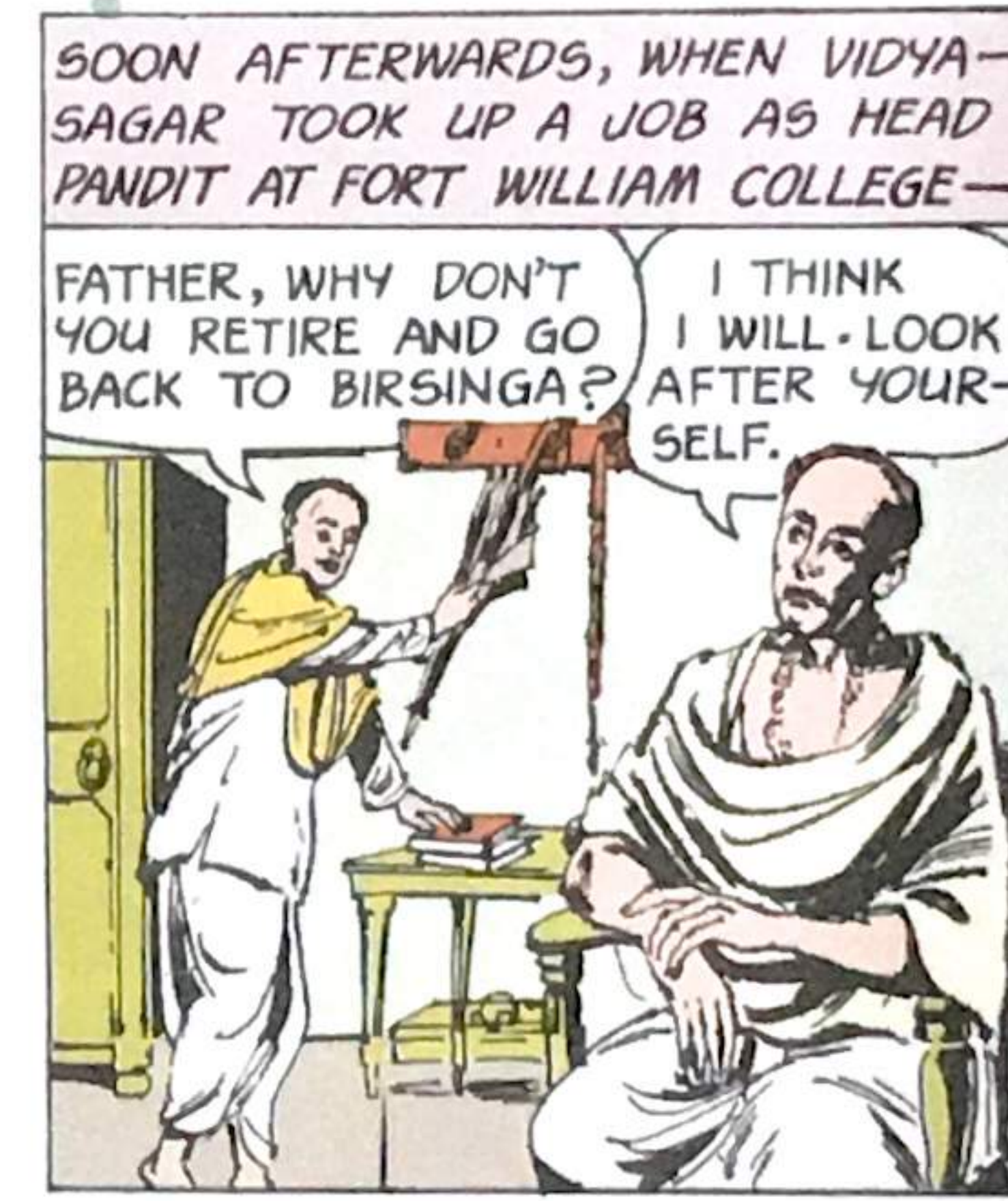
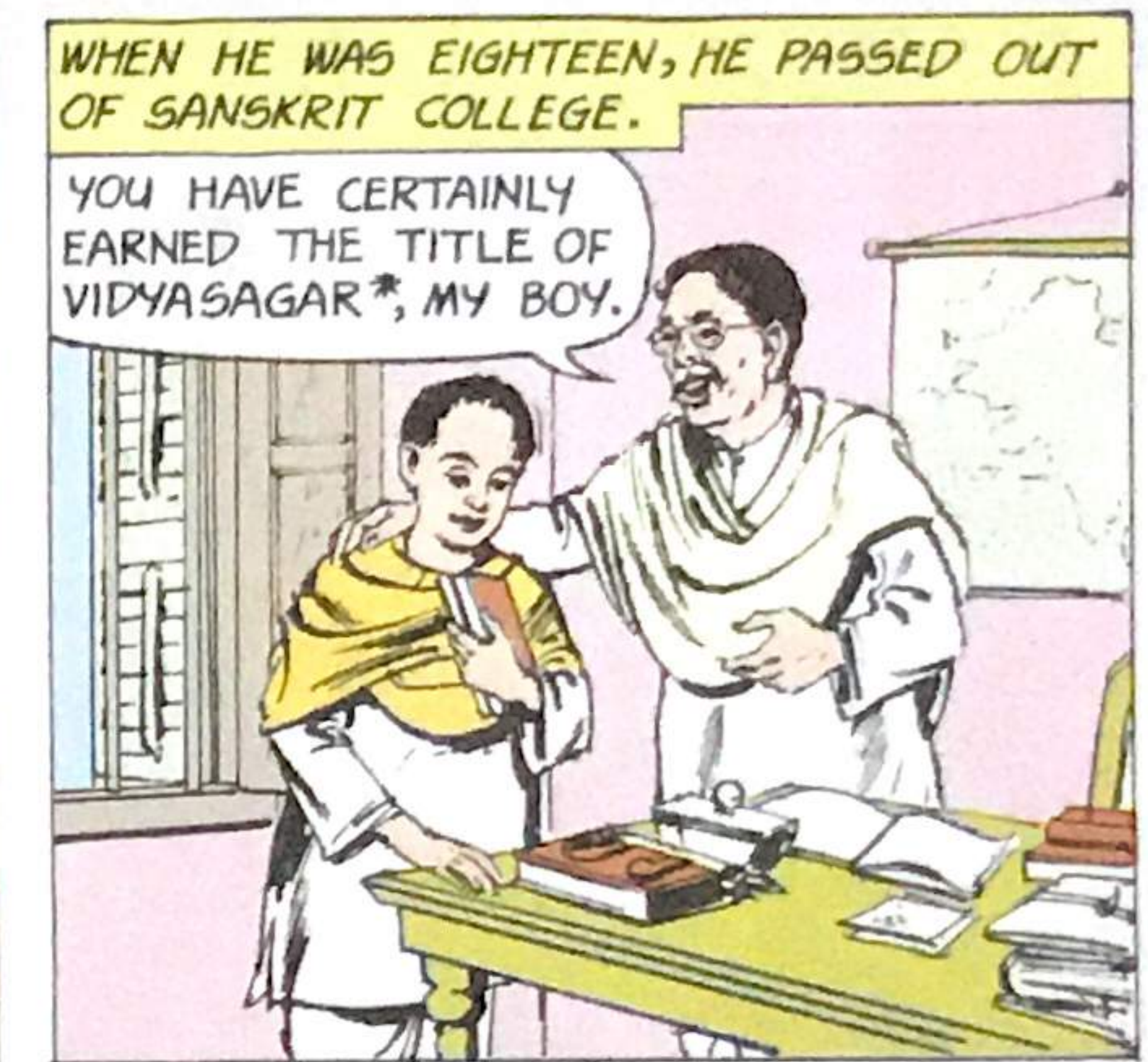
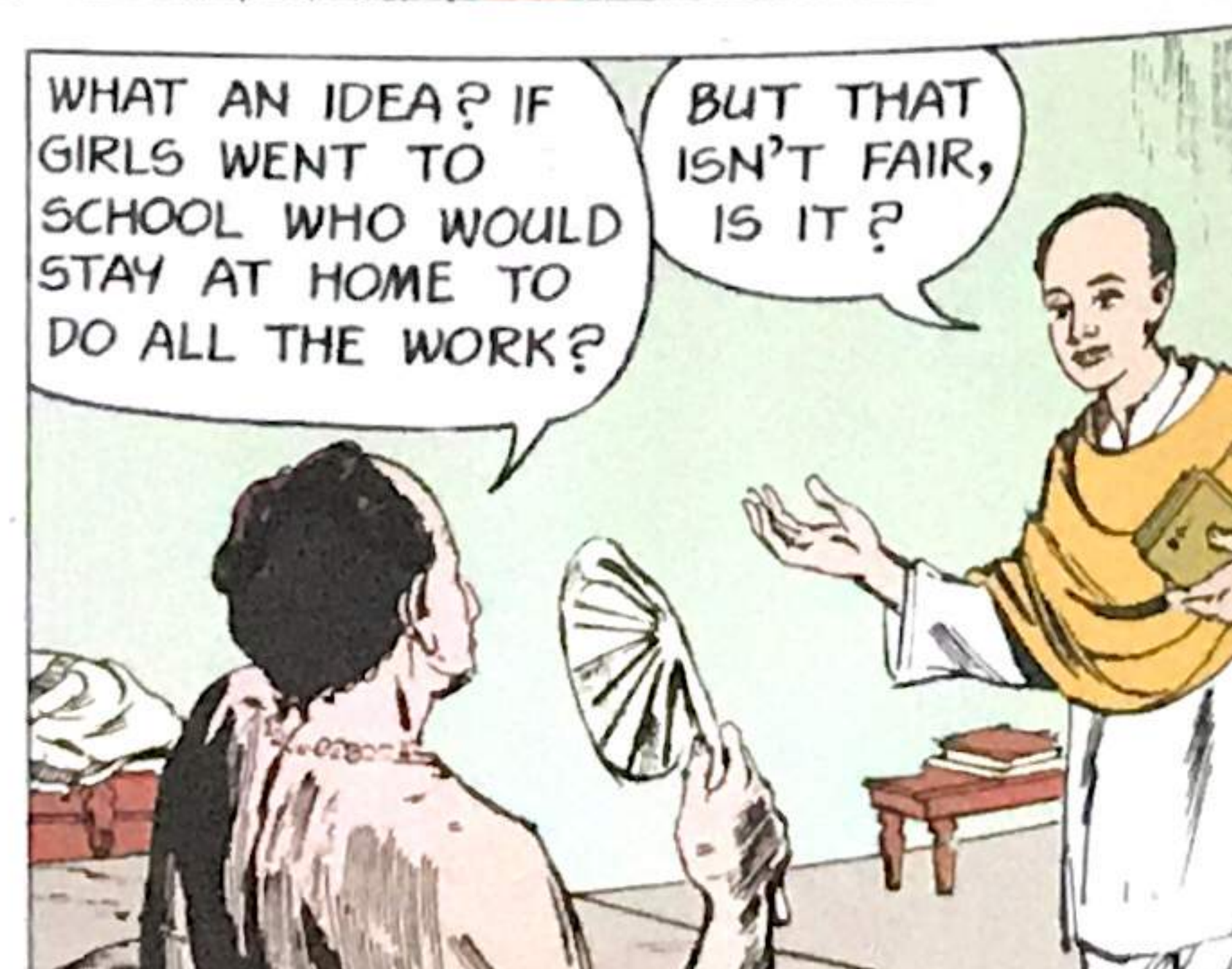
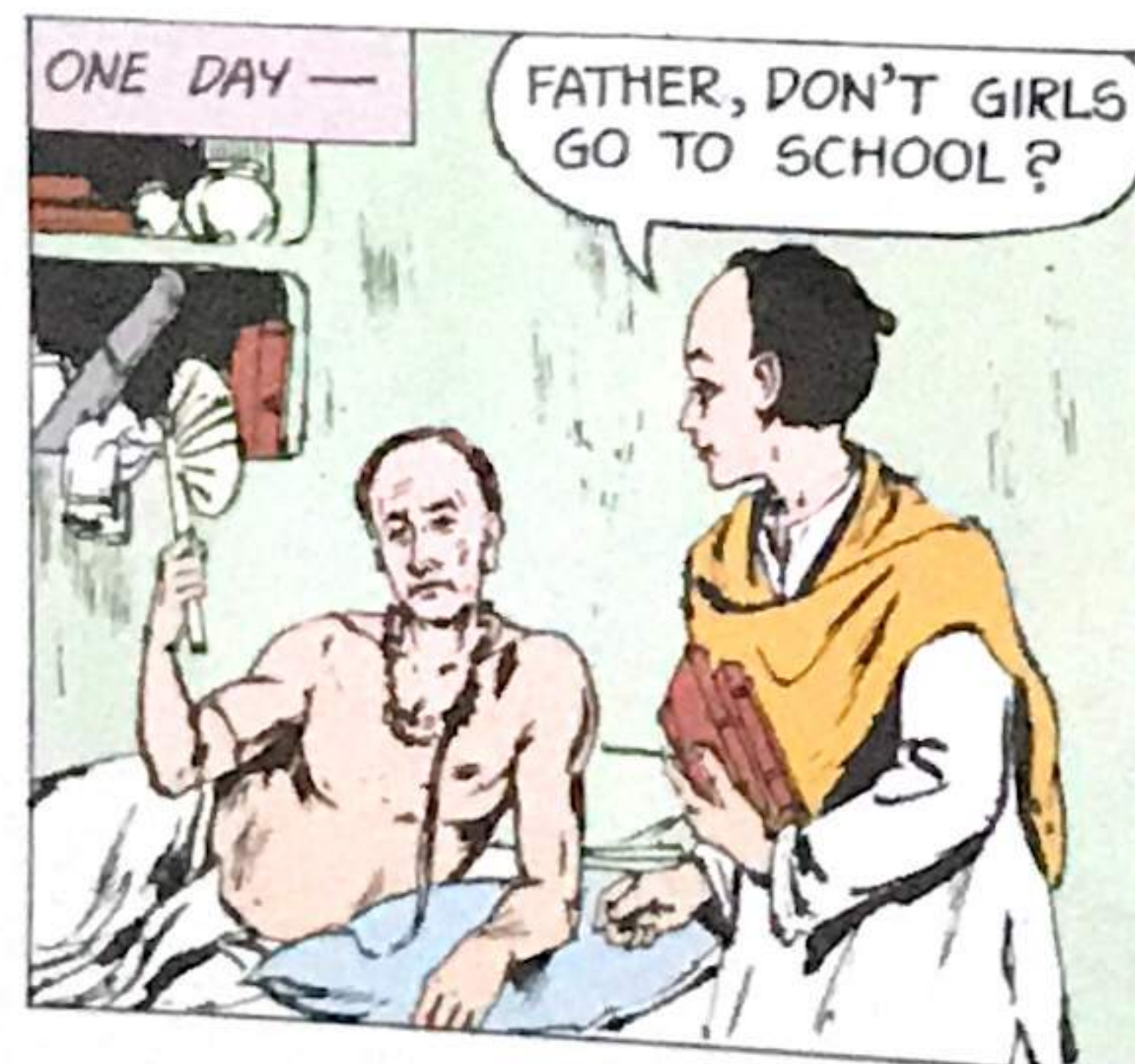
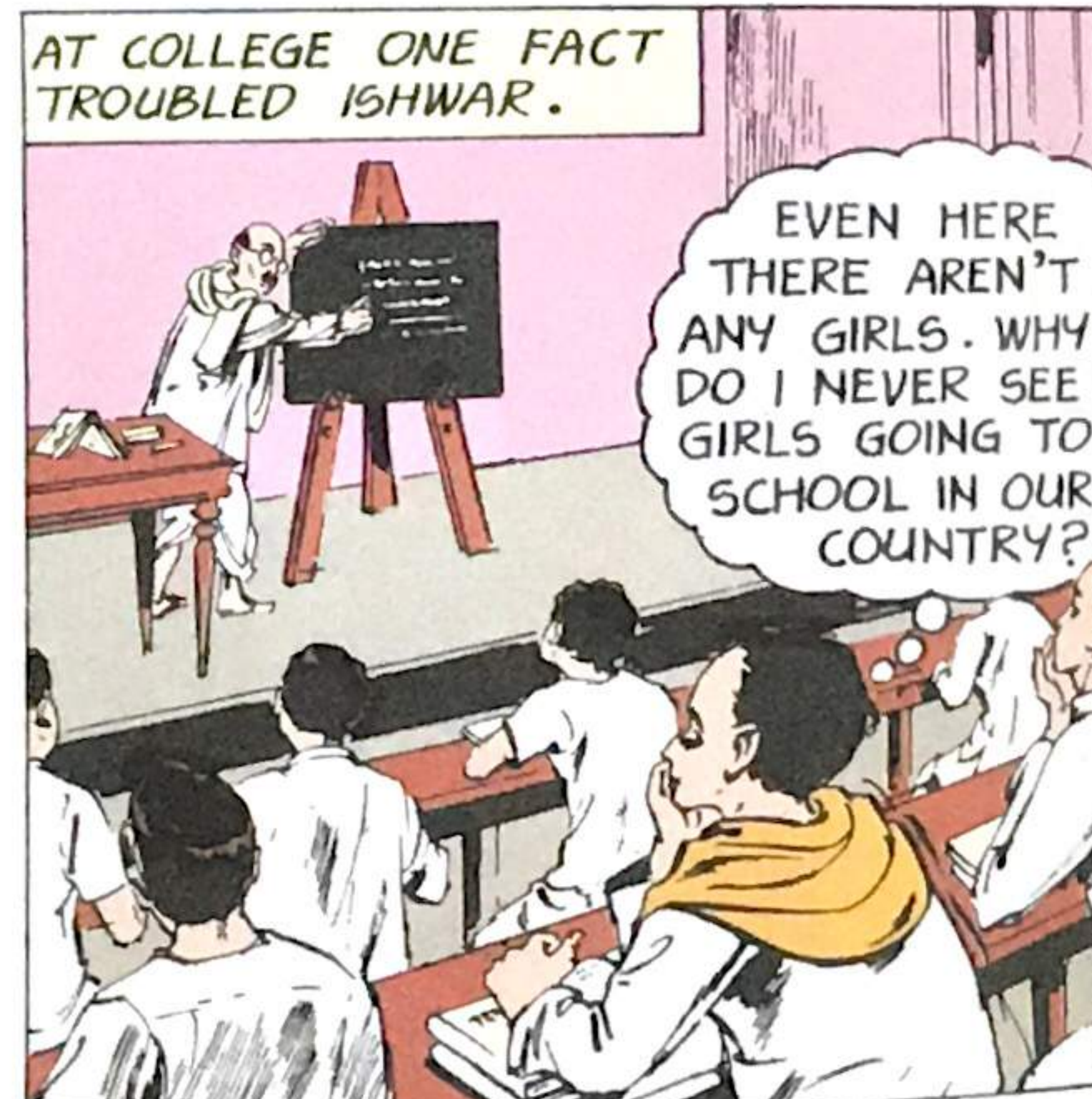
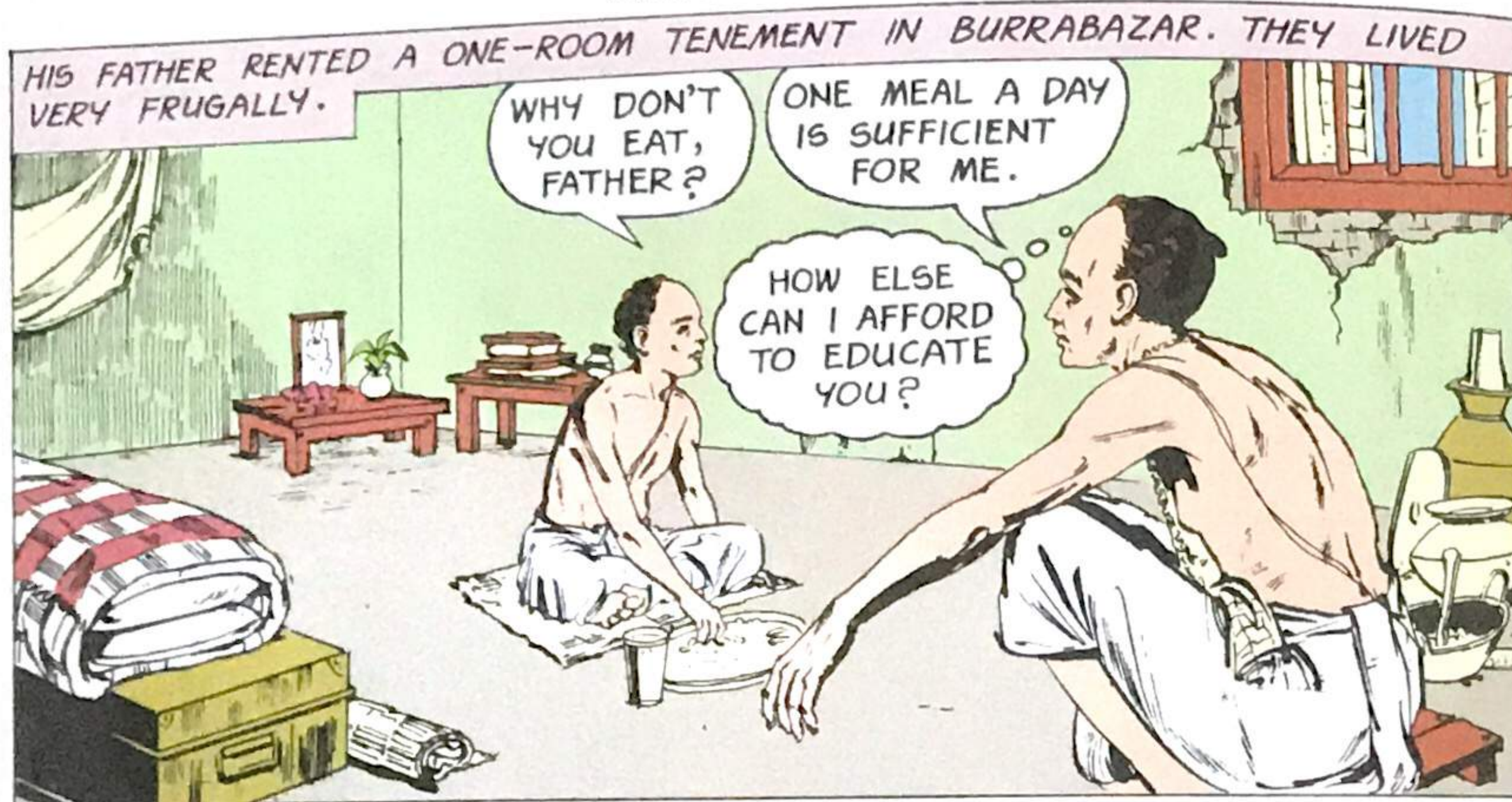
ISHWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

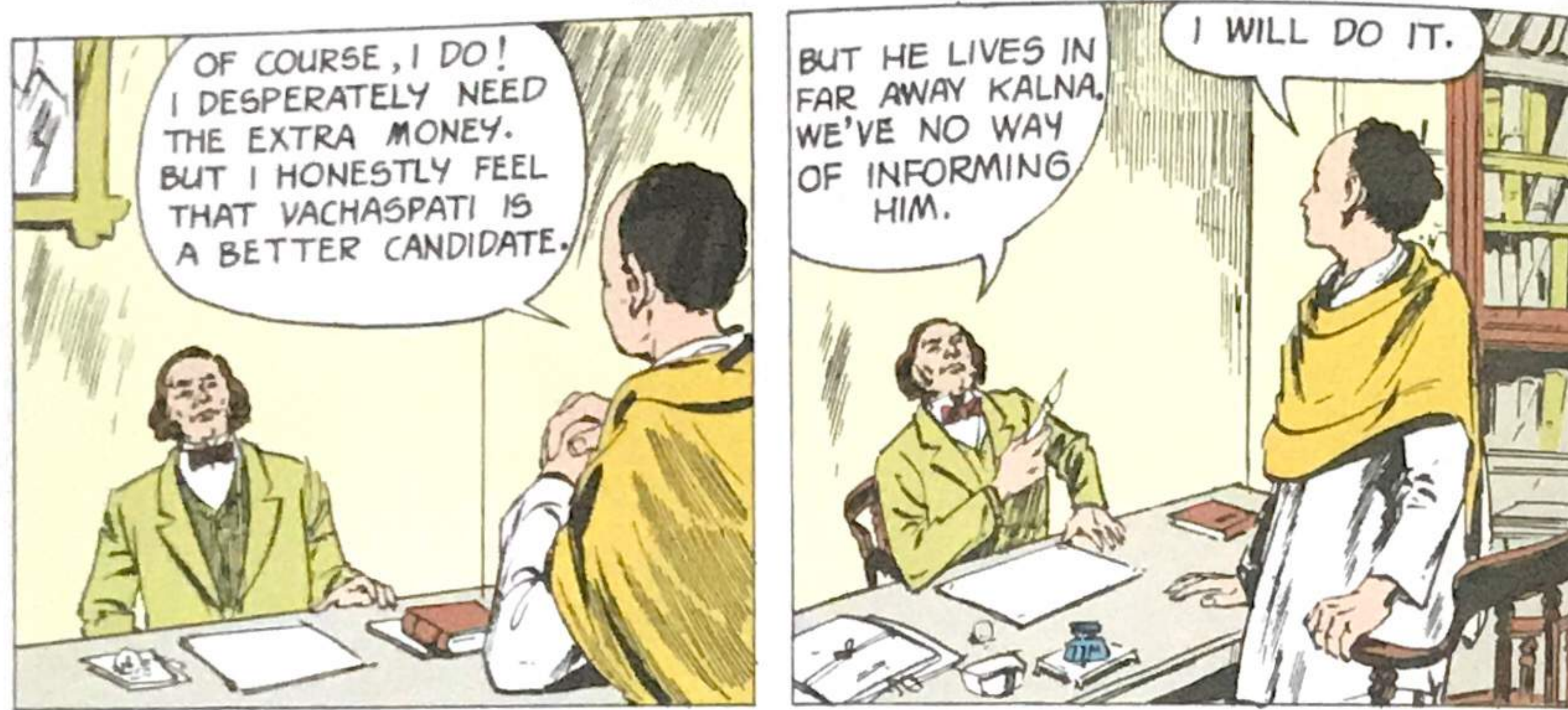


ISHWAR CHANDRA WAS THE SON OF A POOR BRAHMAN COUPLE OF
BIRSINGA, A TINY VILLAGE IN BENGAL.

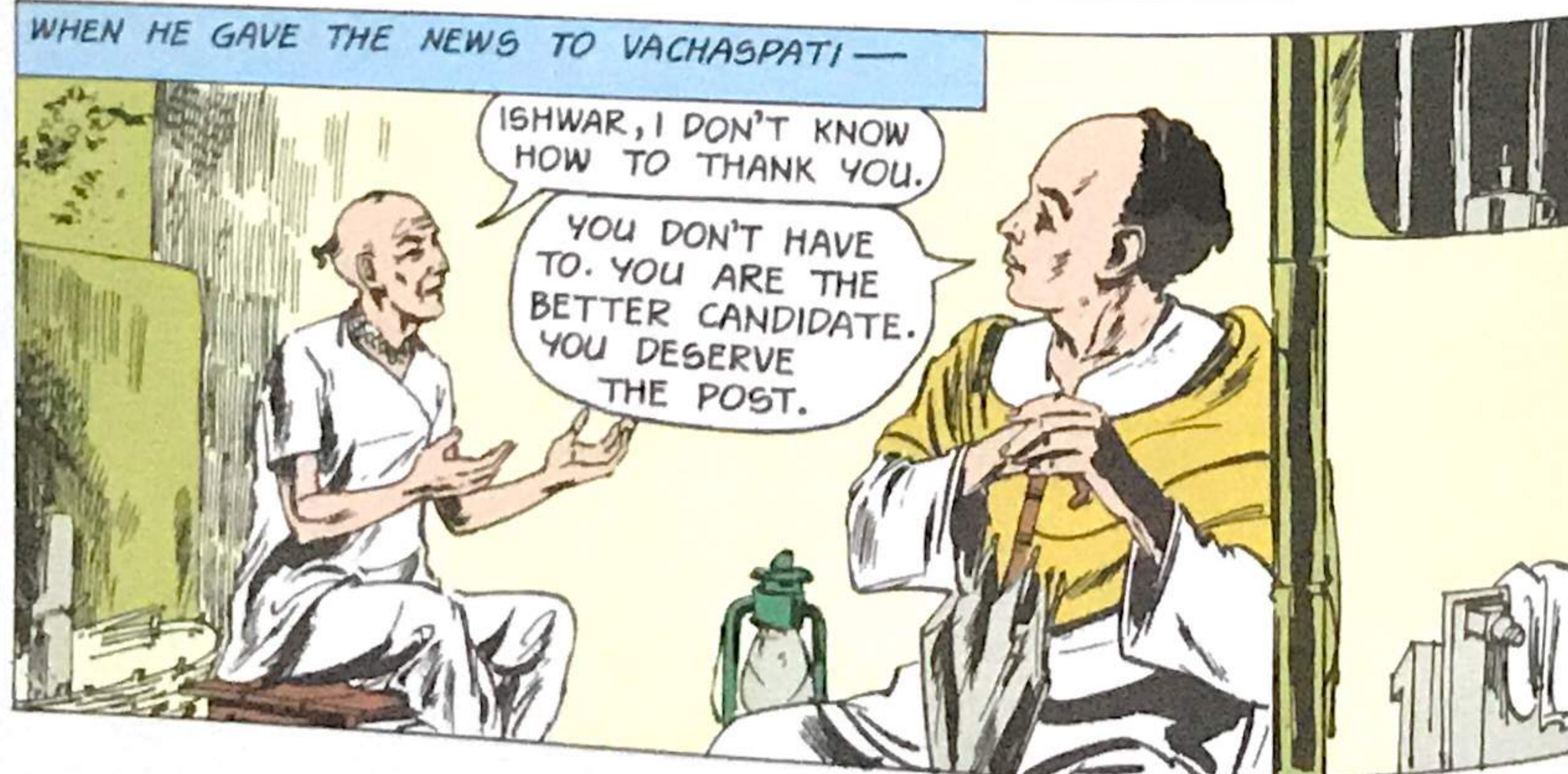


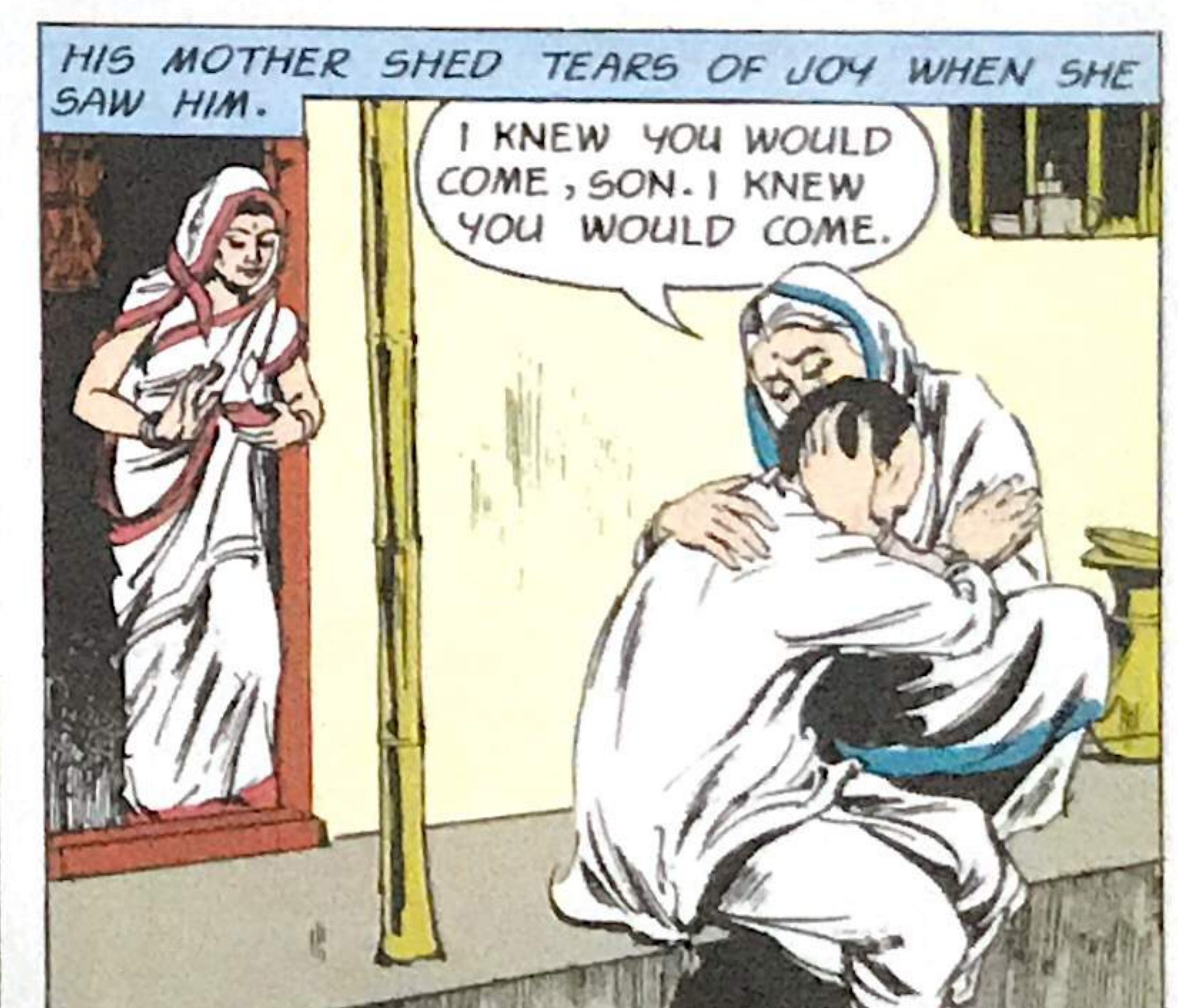
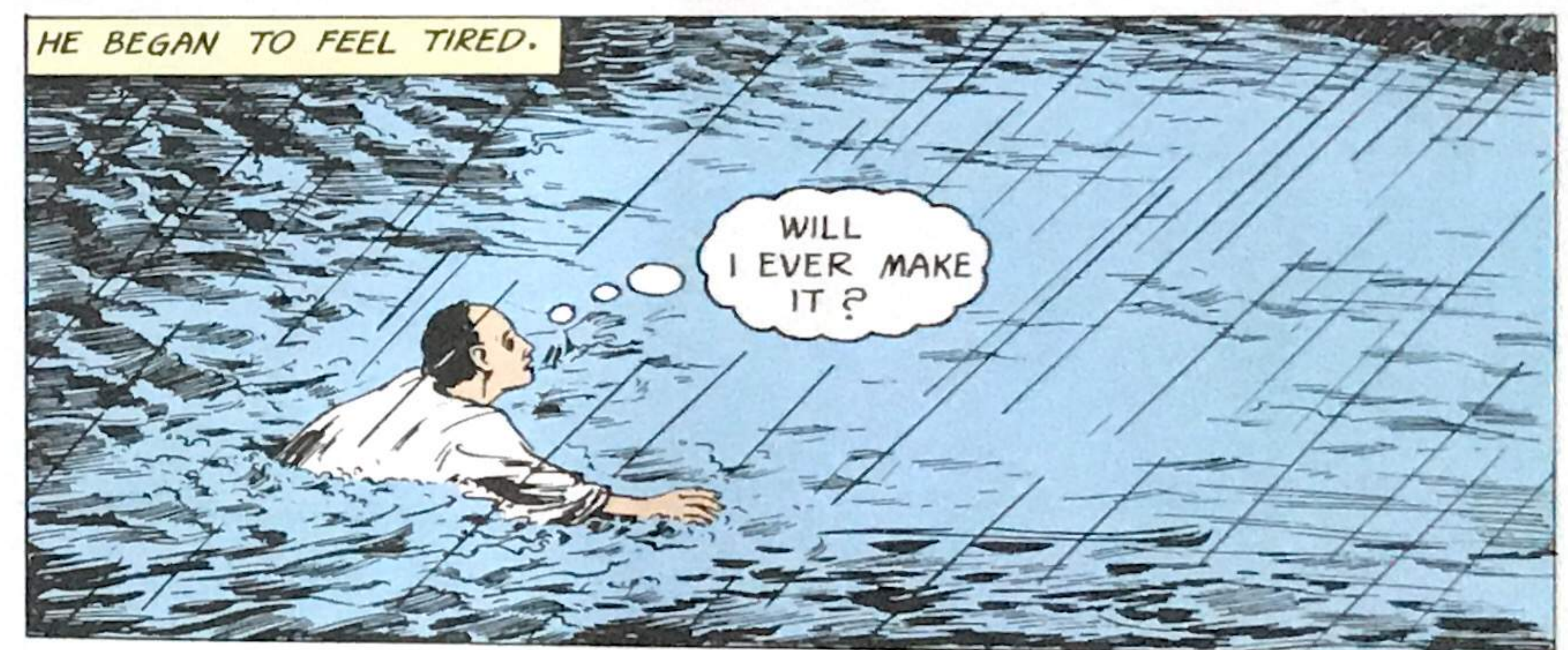
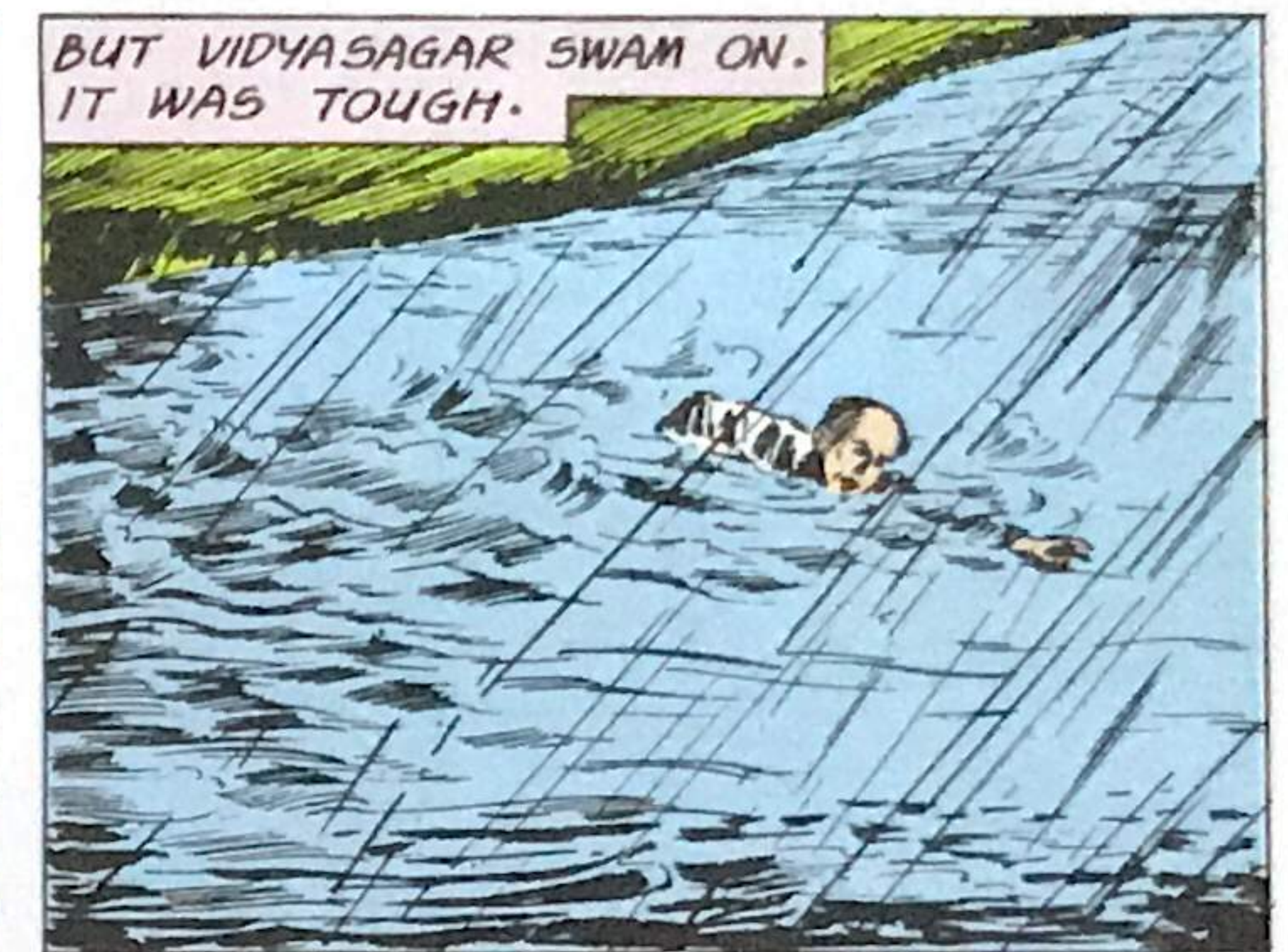
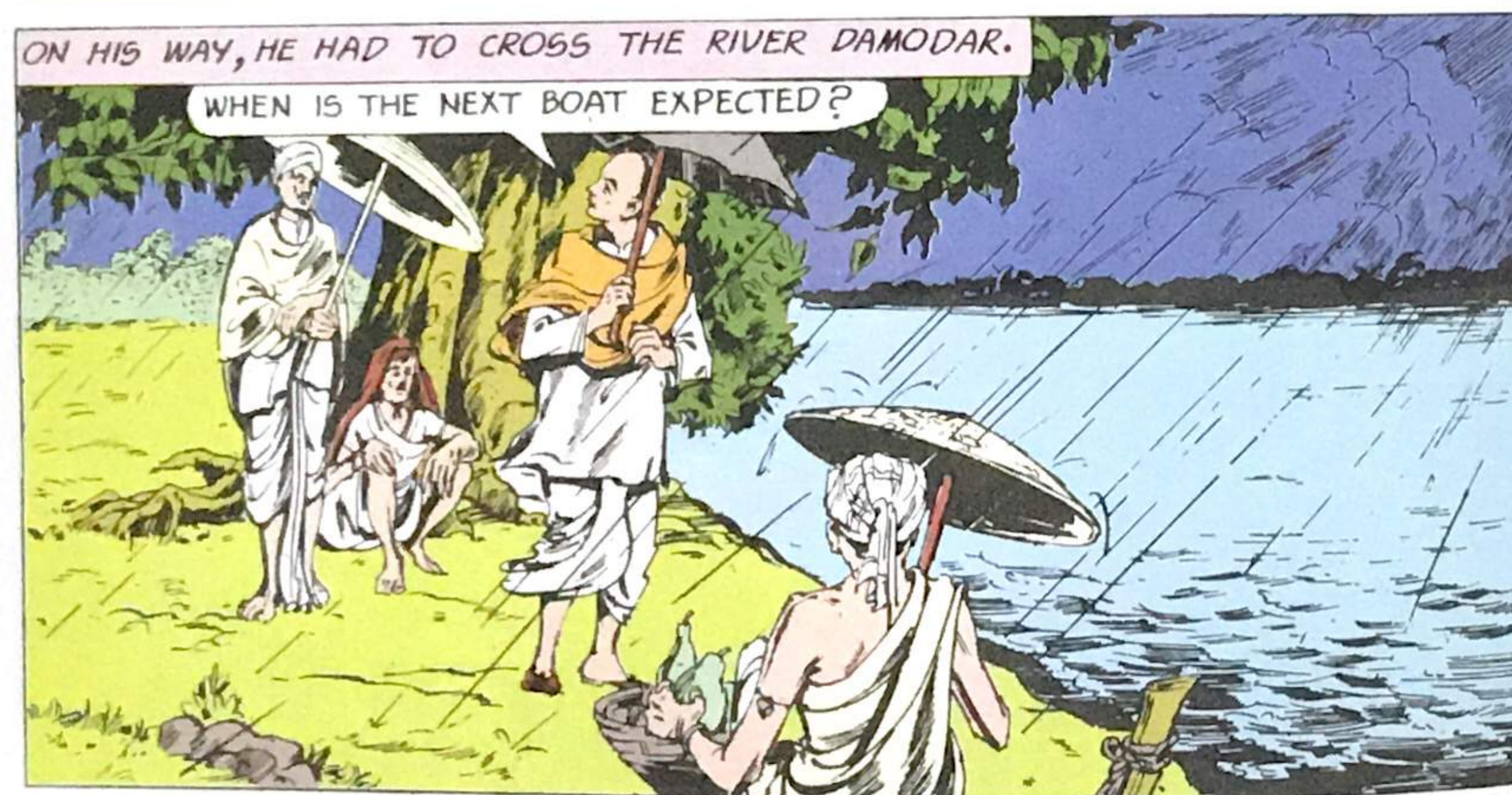
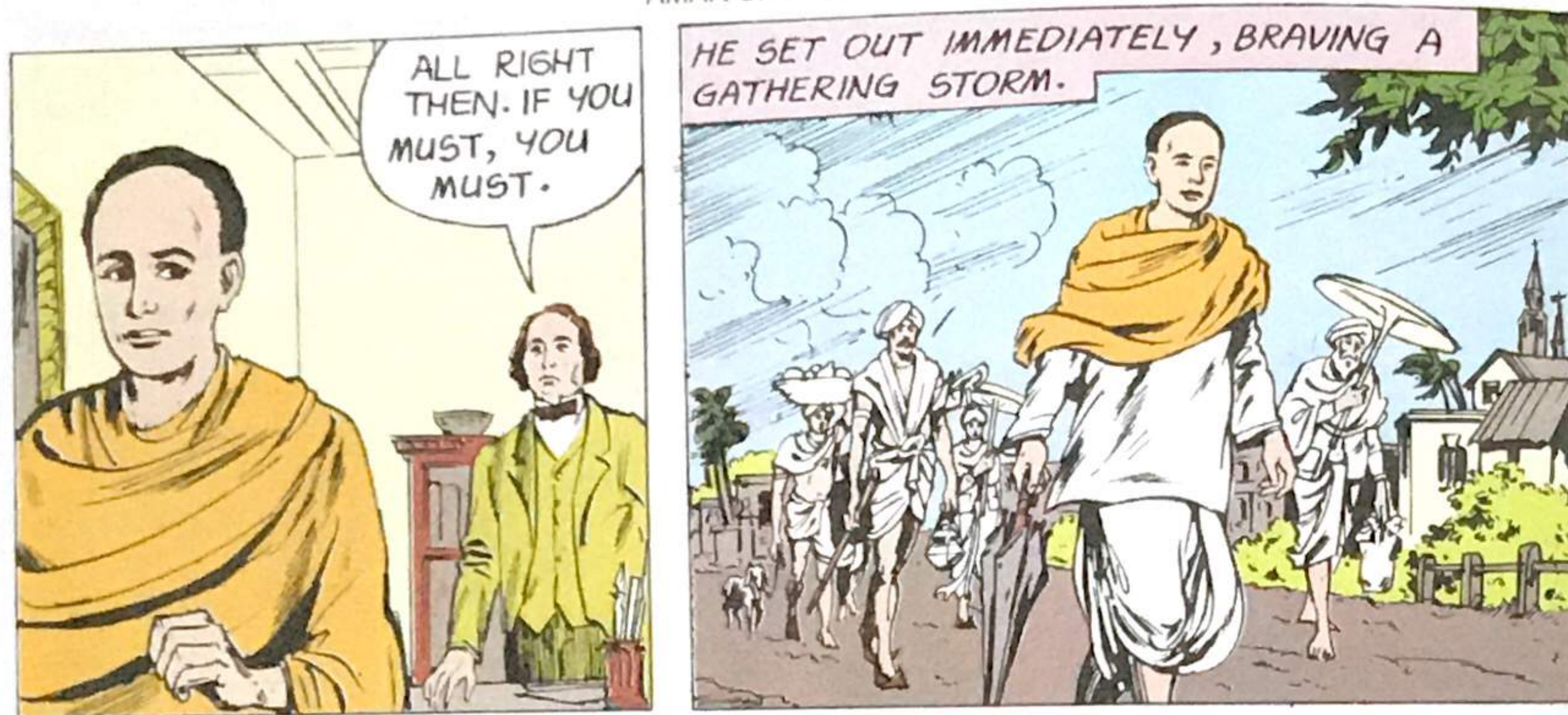
* THE STUDENTS OF THIS COLLEGE WERE TAUGHT IN ENGLISH UNLIKE SANSKRIT COLLEGE WHERE THE MEDIUM WAS SANSKRIT





VIDYASAGAR SET OUT IMMEDIATELY ON FOOT. HE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO TRAVEL BY A CART. ON AND ON HE WALKED. NIGHT FELL BUT HE DID NOT STOP TO REST.





AFTER THE WEDDING, VIDYASAGAR RETURNED TO CALCUTTA.



THERE IS ANOTHER VACANCY AT SANSKRIT COLLEGE. WILL YOU ACCEPT THE JOB?

THANK YOU, MR. MARSHALL. I WILL.

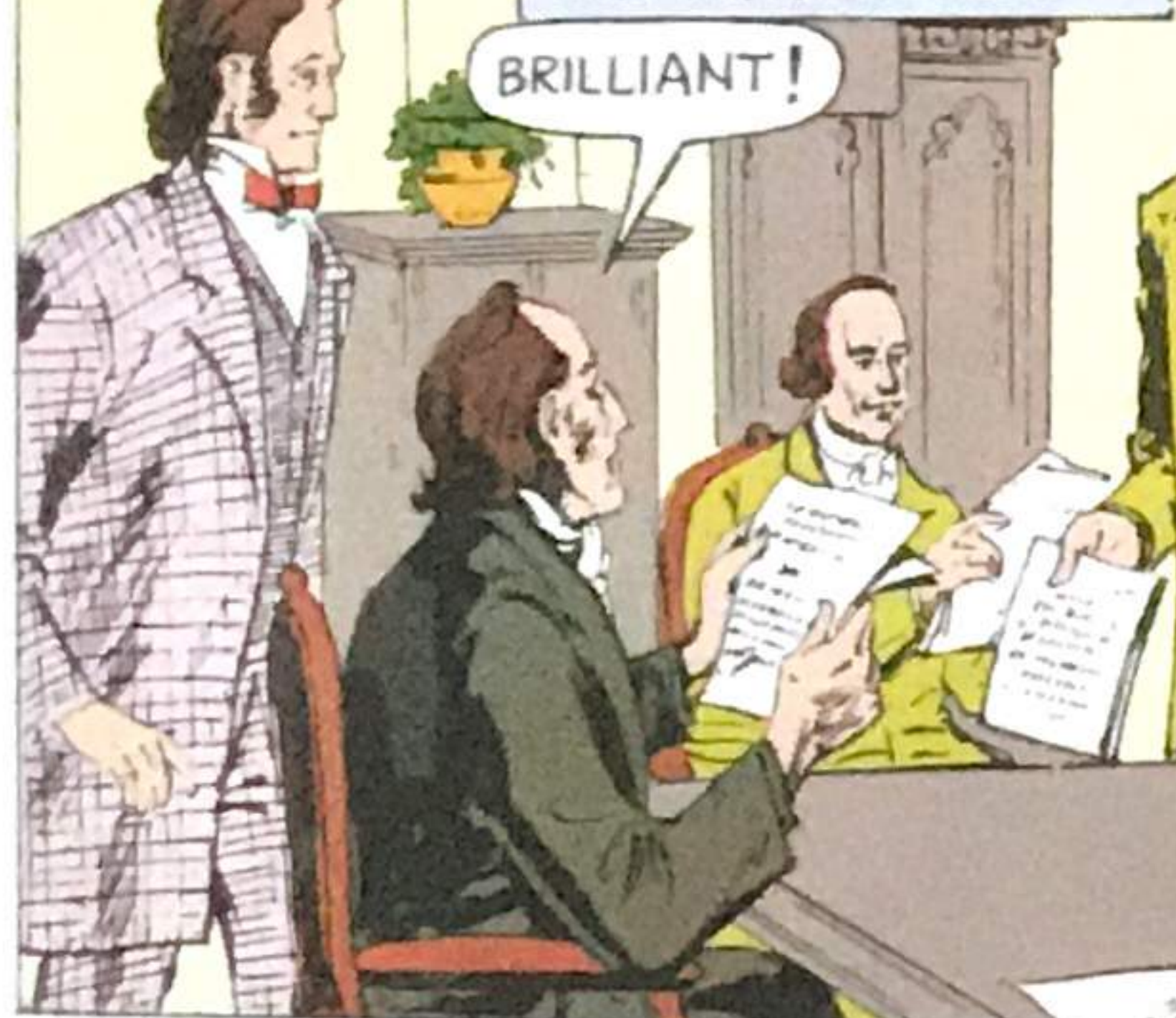
HE WORKED HARD AT HIS JOB.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING SO LATE AT NIGHT?

OH, NOTHING. JUST PREPARING A REPORT FOR THE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE COLLEGE.



WHEN COPIES OF THE REPORT REACHED THE AUTHORITIES —

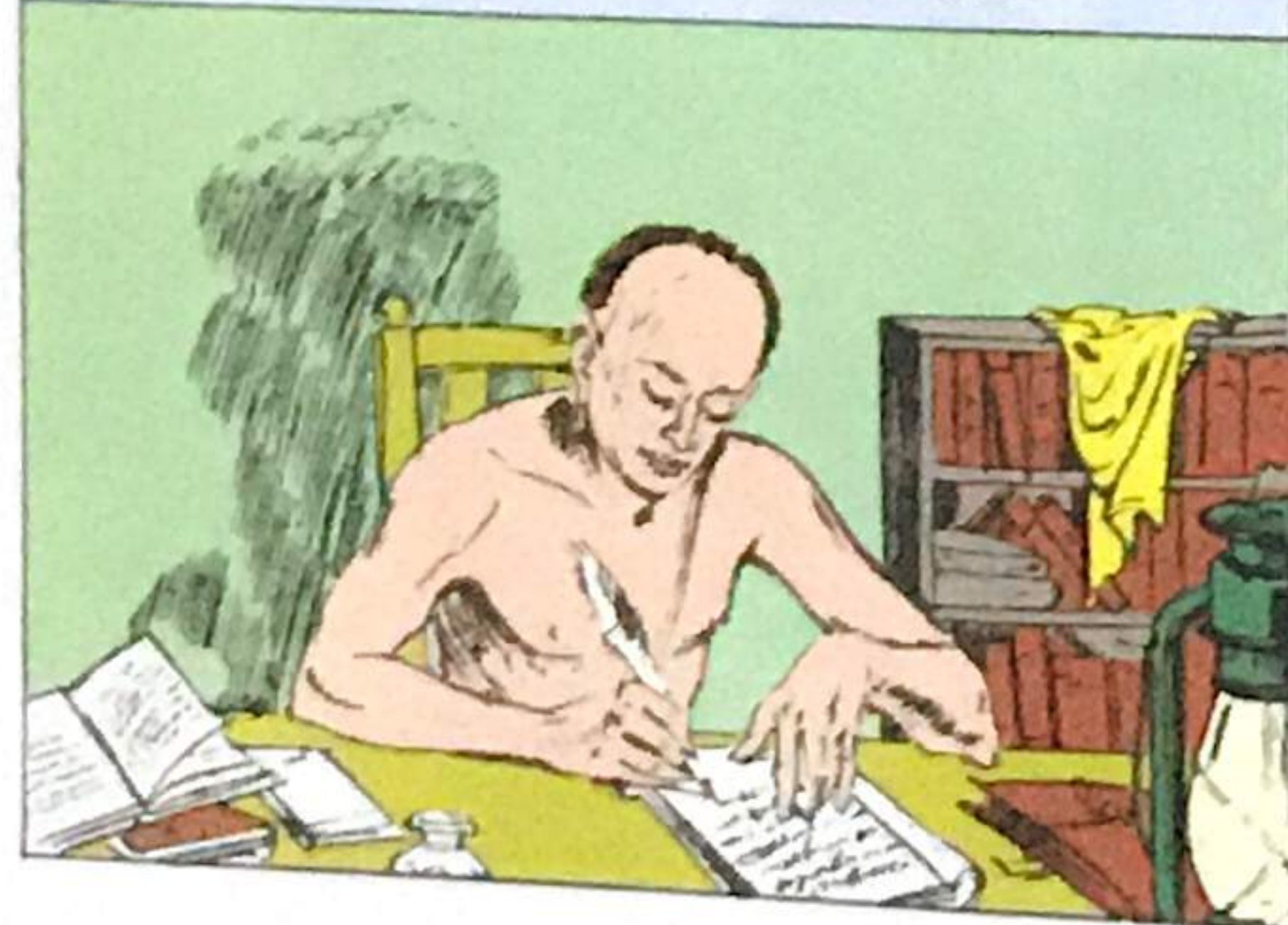


BRILLIANT!

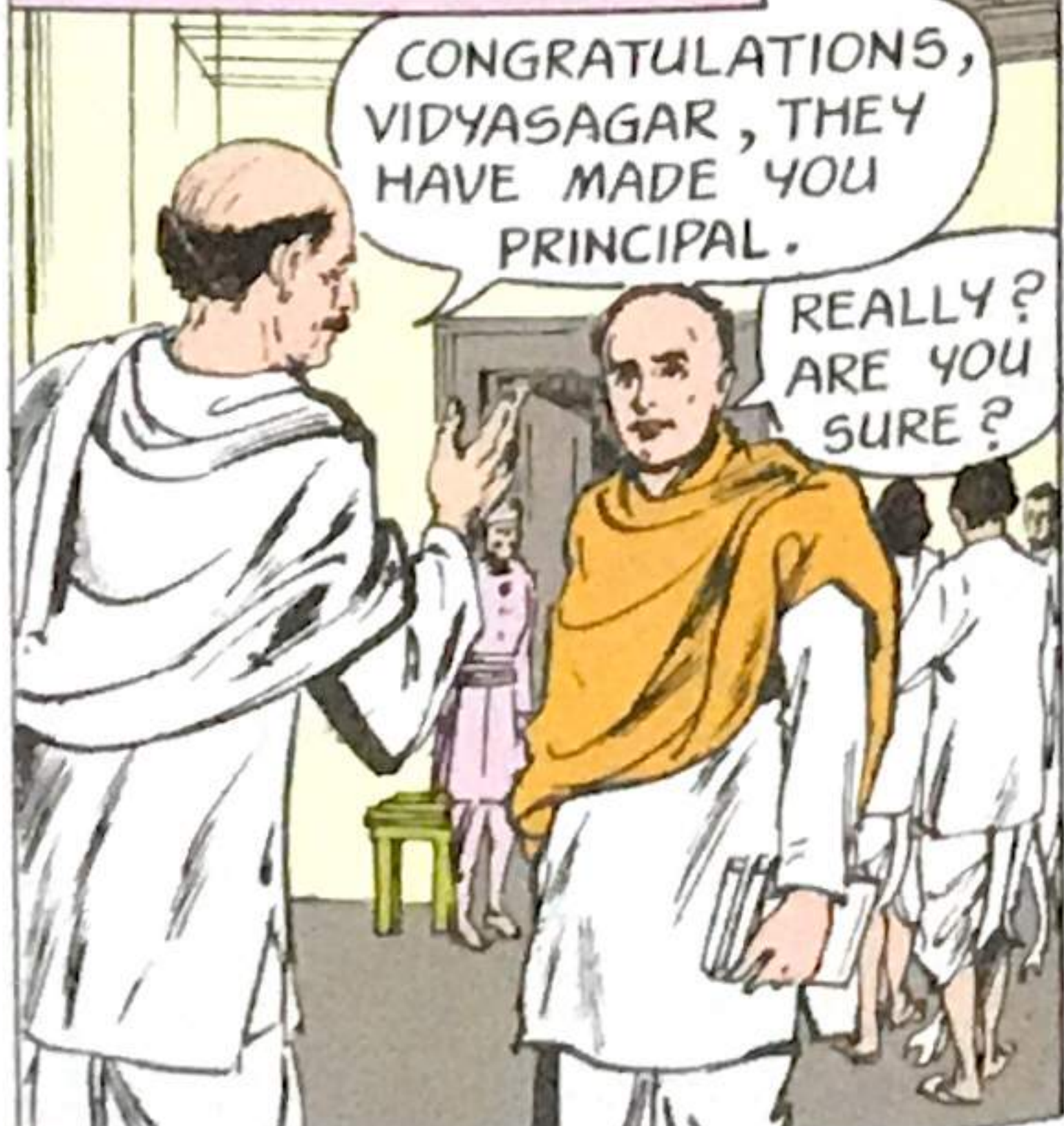
SUCH ORIGINAL IDEAS!

THE MAN SHOULD BE MADE PRINCIPAL.

VIDYASAGAR WAS UNAWARE OF THE PLANS THE AUTHORITIES HAD FOR HIM. HE HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO BECOME A WRITER. AND 1847 SAW HIS FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK, "VETALA PANCHAVIMSHATI".



A FEW DAYS LATER —



CONGRATULATIONS, VIDYASAGAR, THEY HAVE MADE YOU PRINCIPAL.

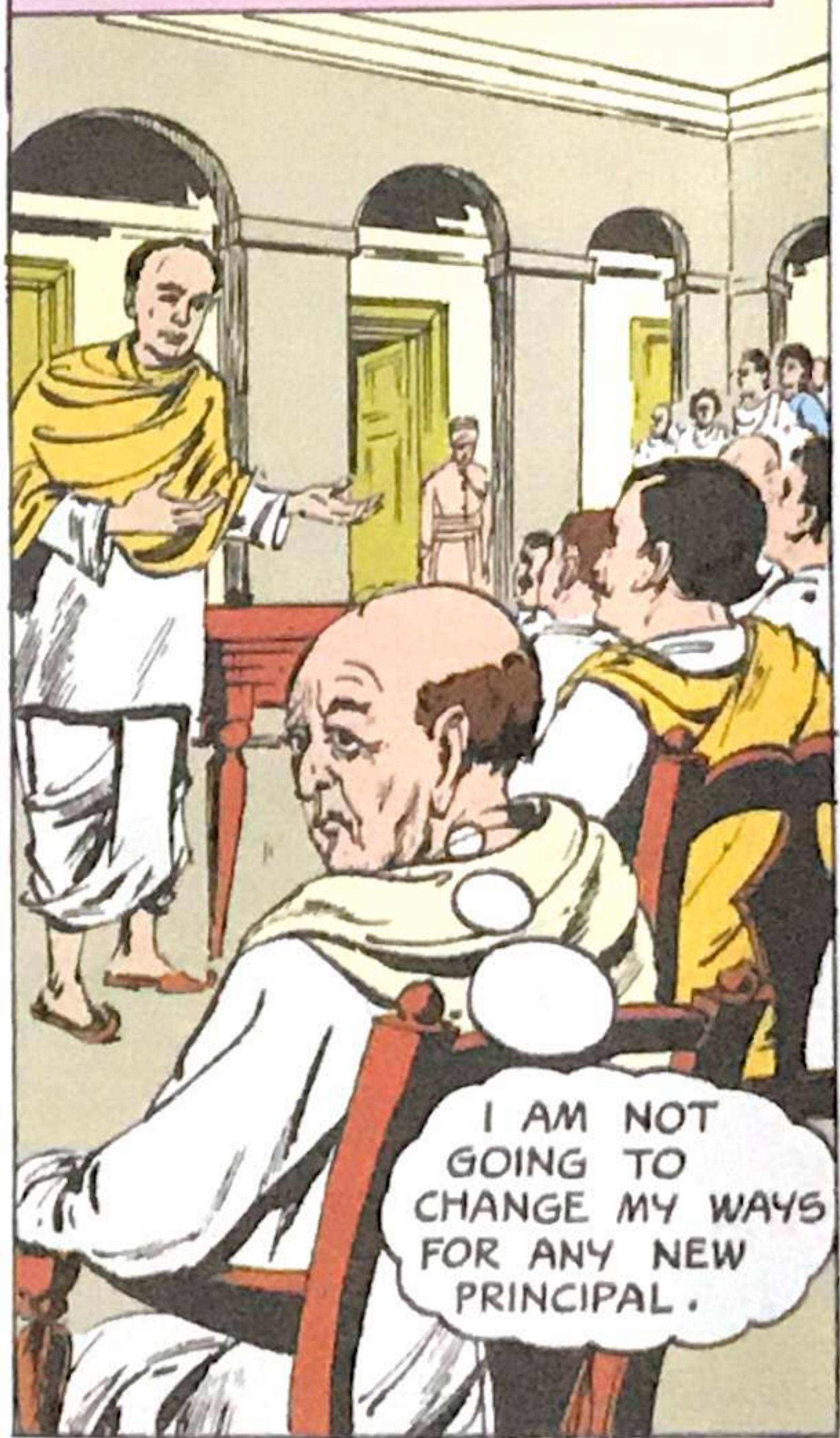
REALLY? ARE YOU SURE?

HIS FIRST ACT AS PRINCIPAL WAS TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE.



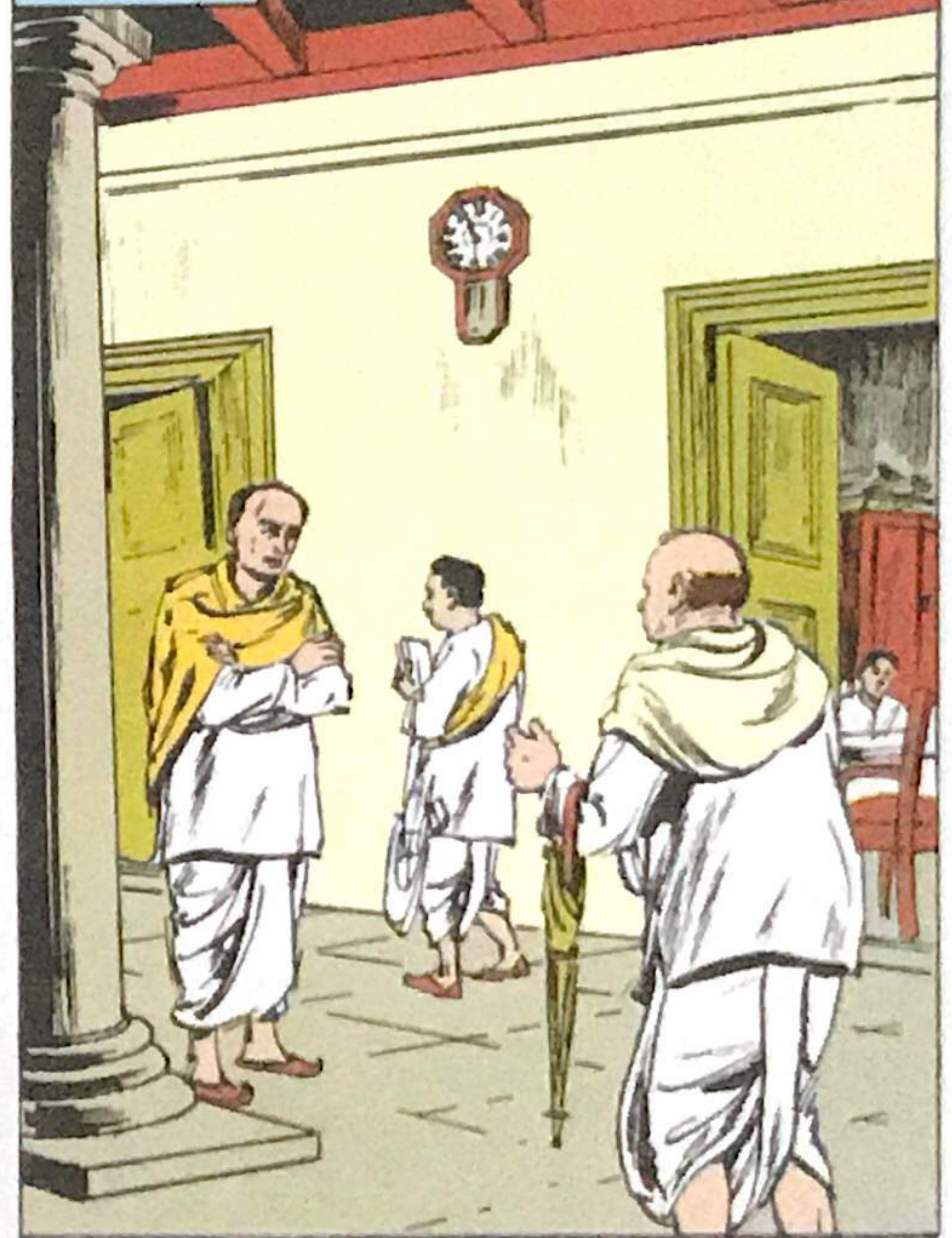
MOST STUDENTS AND TEACHERS COME TO COLLEGE WHENEVER THEY LIKE. THIS MUST STOP. EVERYONE MUST BE PUNCTUAL.

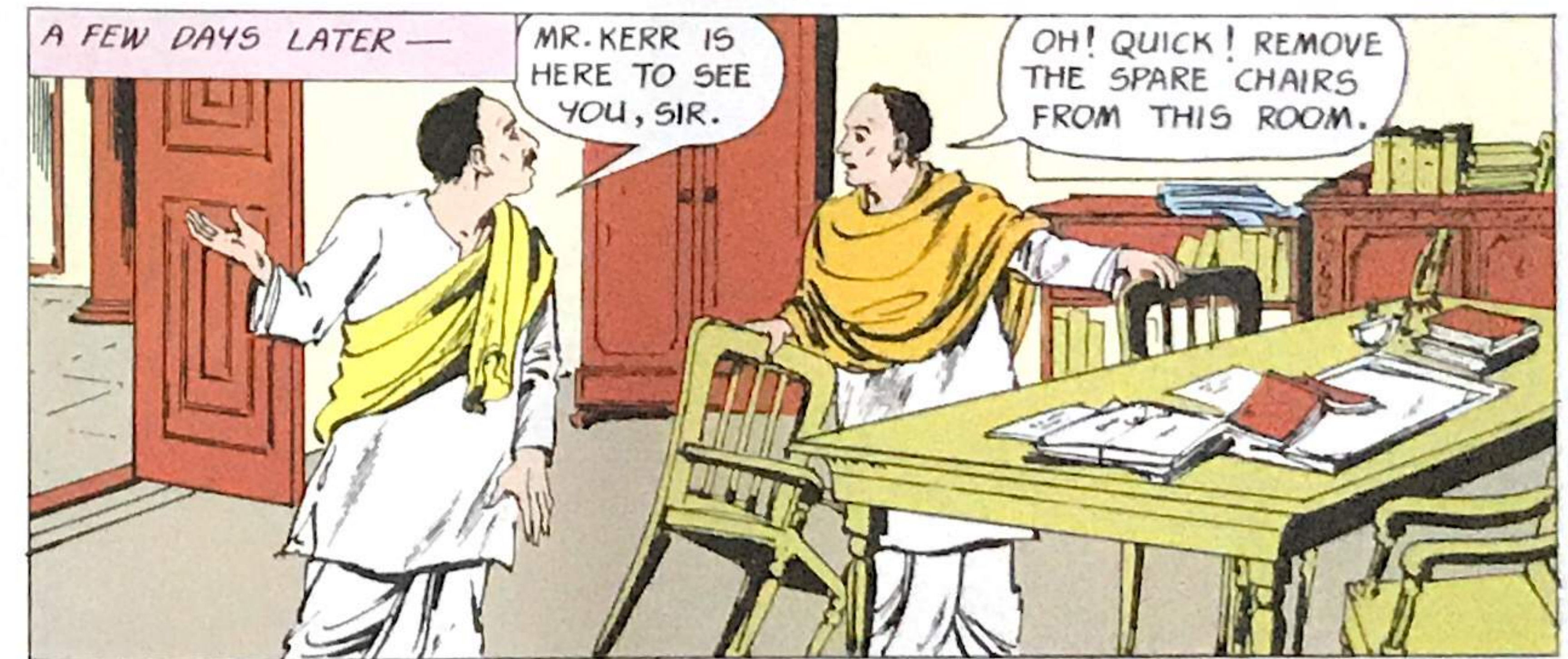
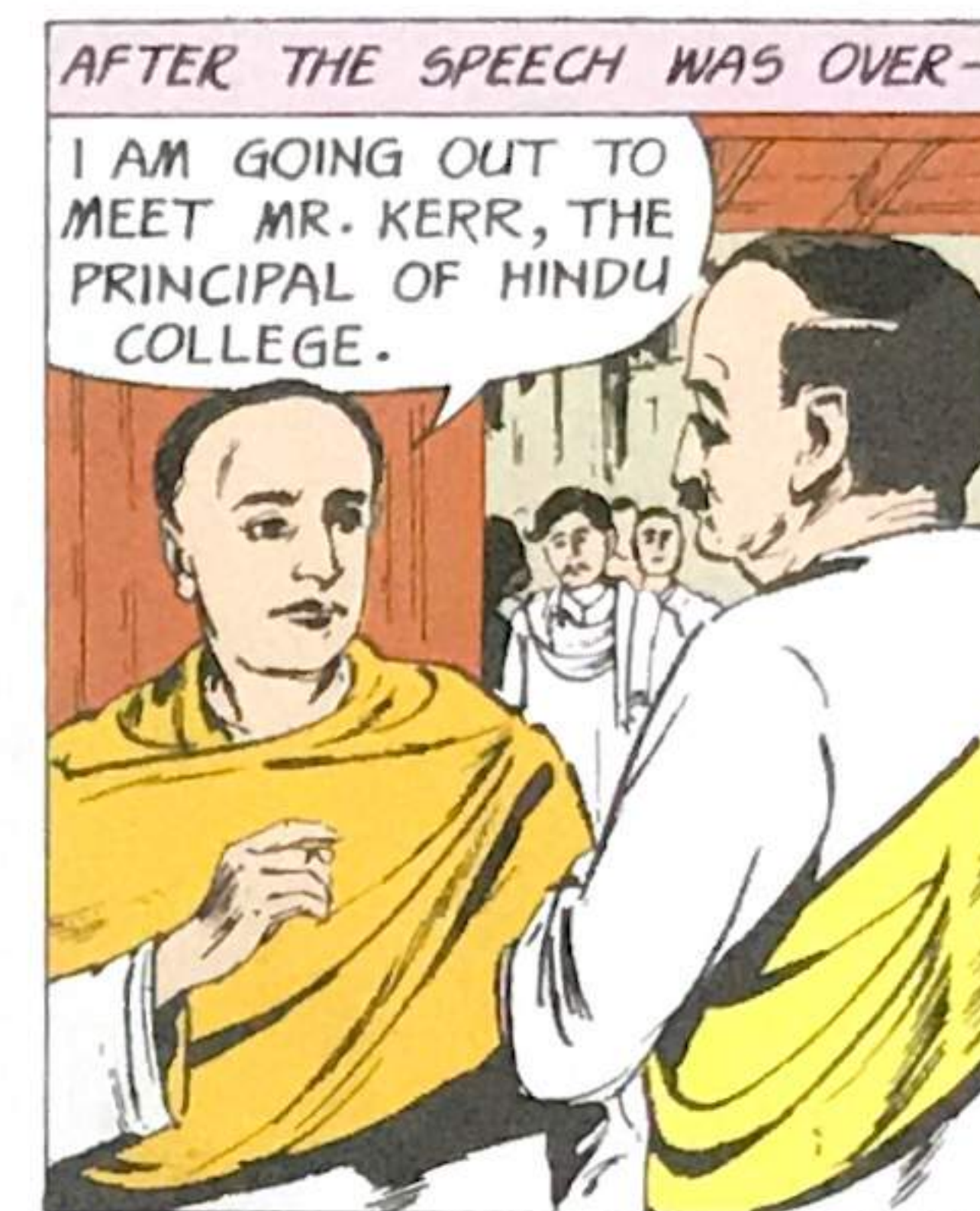
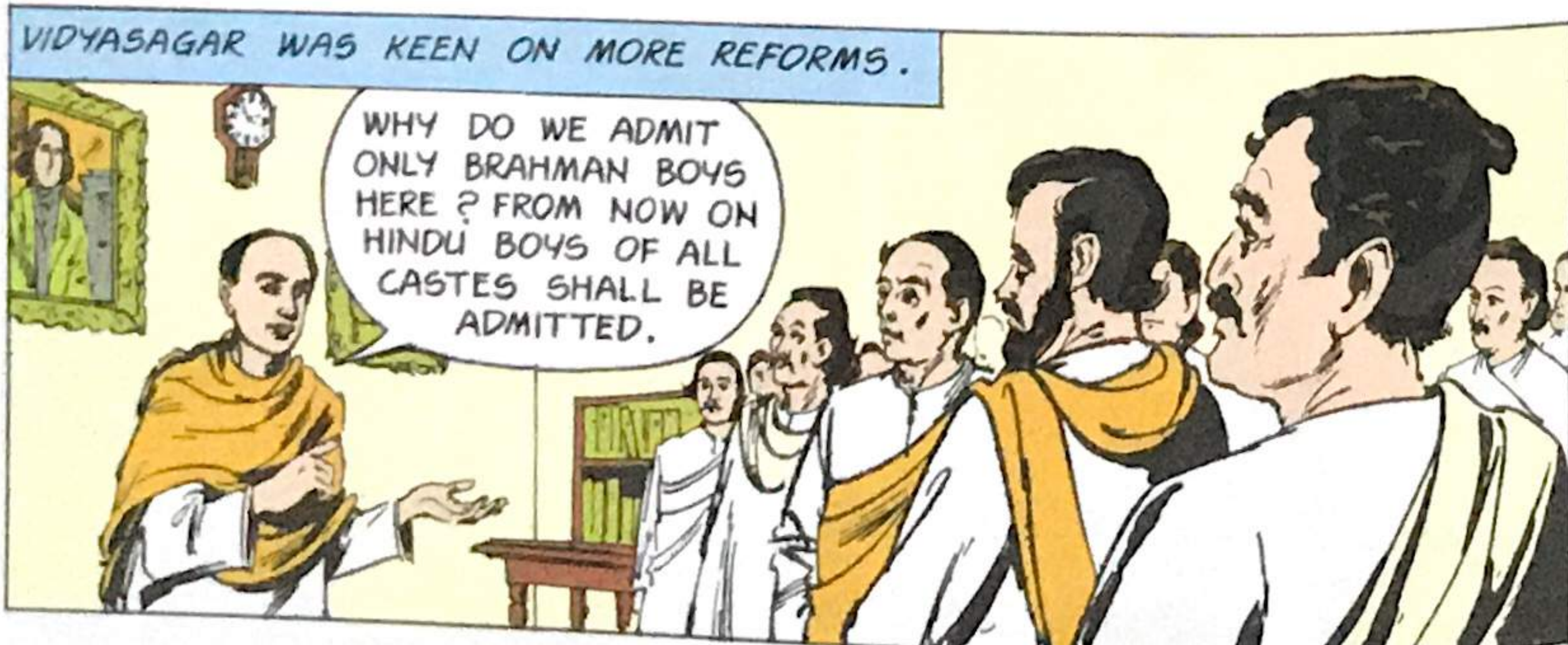
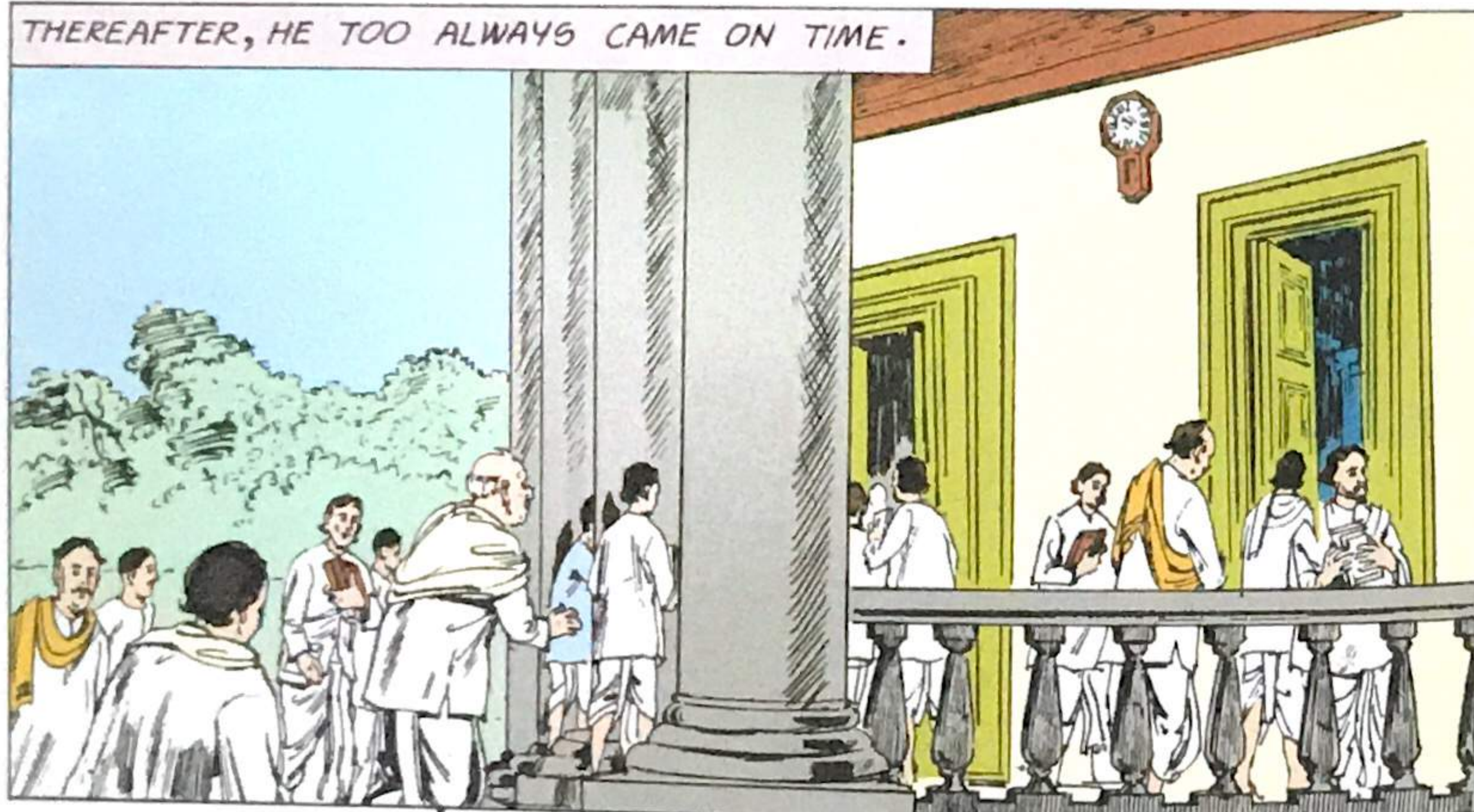
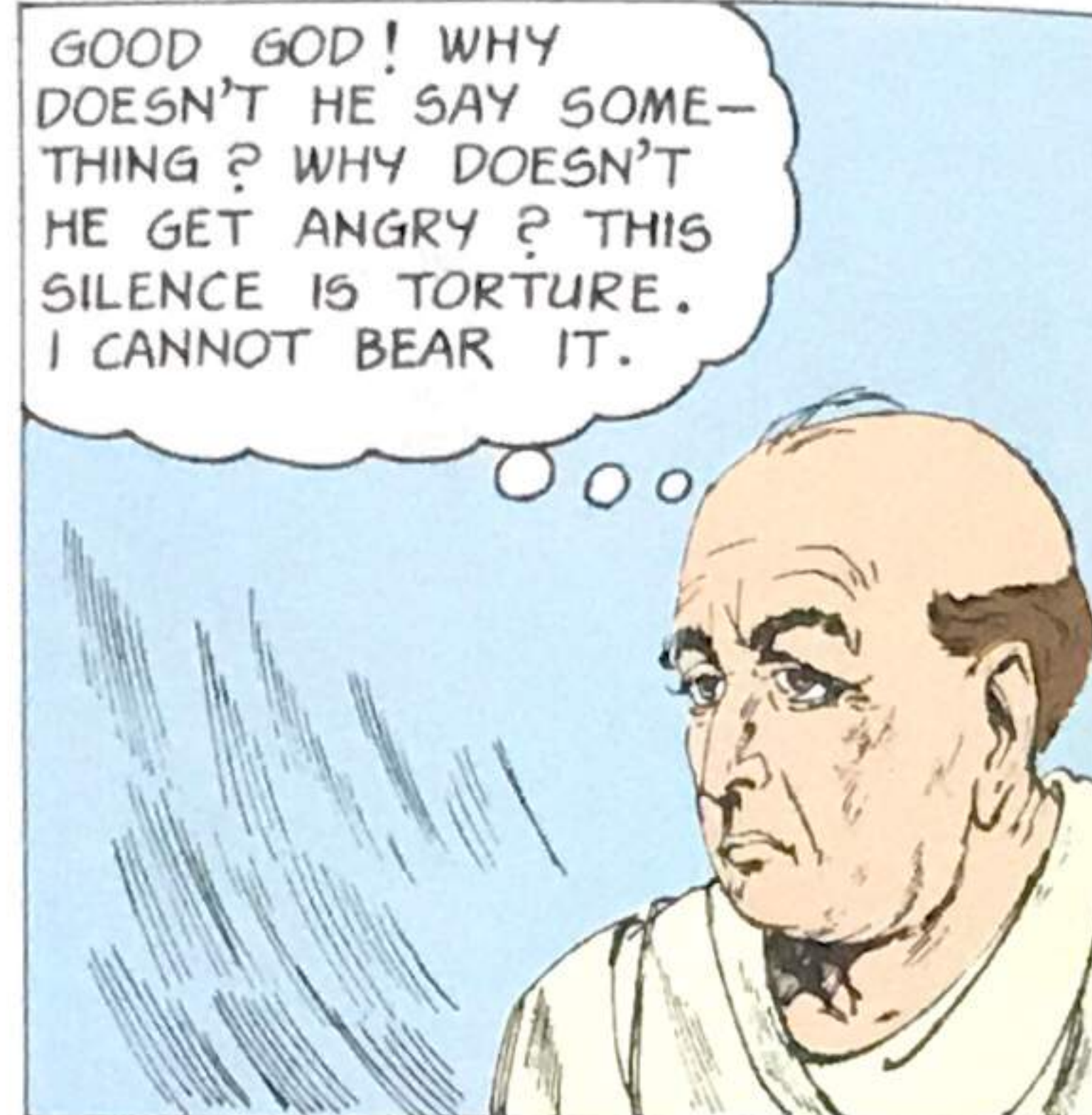
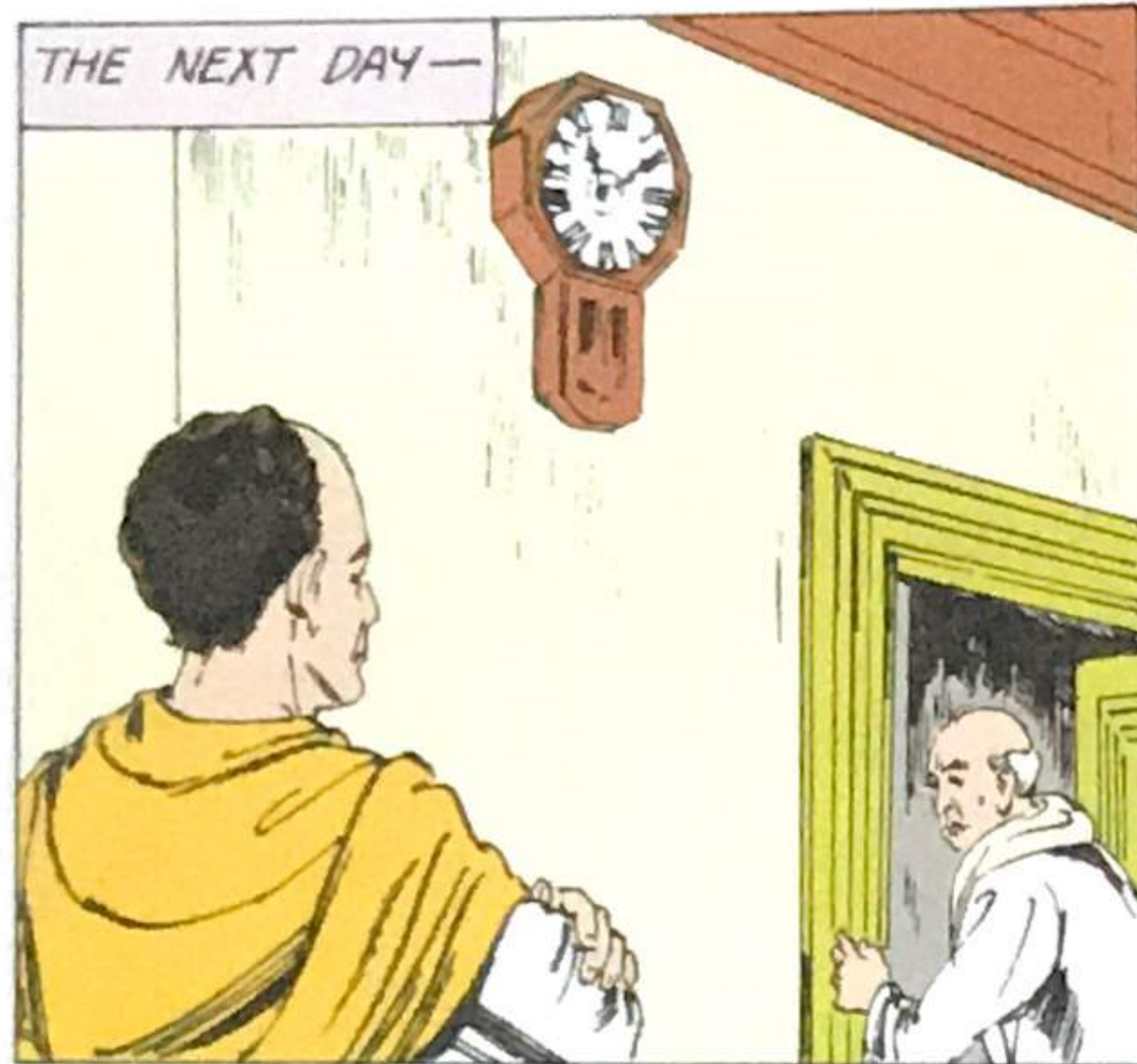
ALL IN THE ASSEMBLY WERE IMPRESSED BY HIS ZEAL. ALL EXCEPT AN OLD TEACHER.

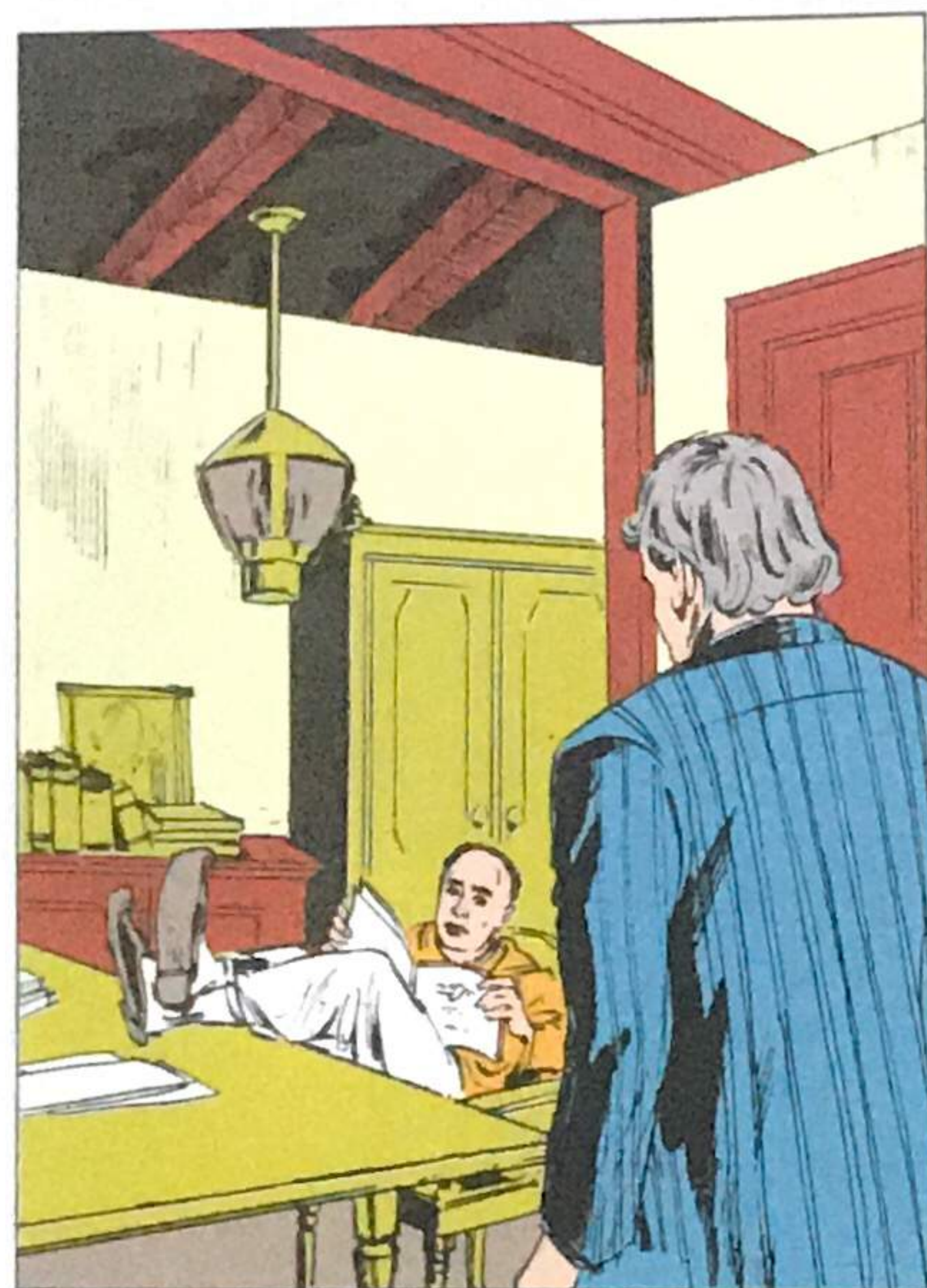


I AM NOT GOING TO CHANGE MY WAYS FOR ANY NEW PRINCIPAL.

WHEN THE TEACHER ARRIVED LATE THE NEXT DAY, VIDYASAGAR WAS WAITING AT THE DOOR, BUT HE DID NOT SAY A WORD.

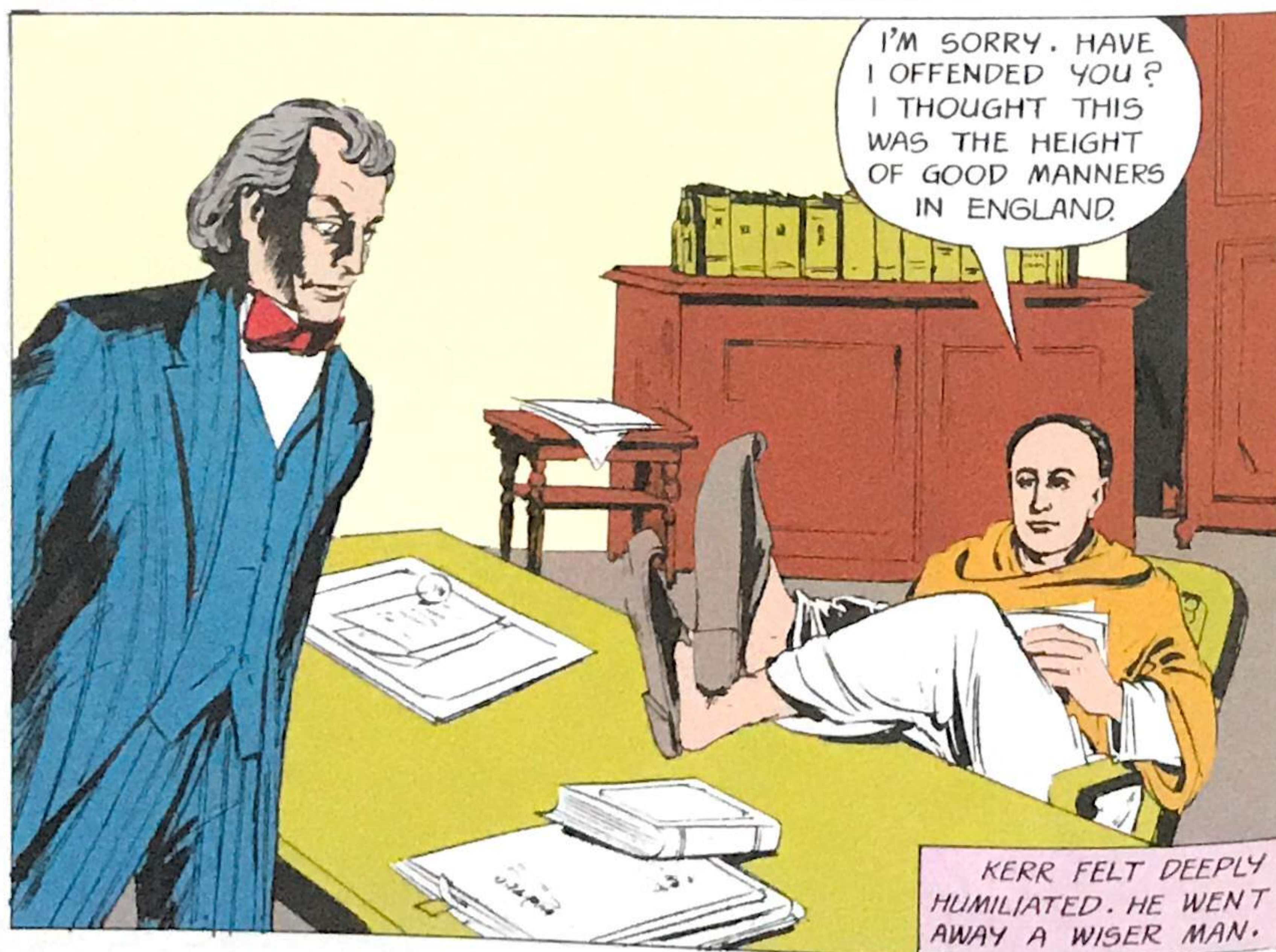






KERR EXPLODED.

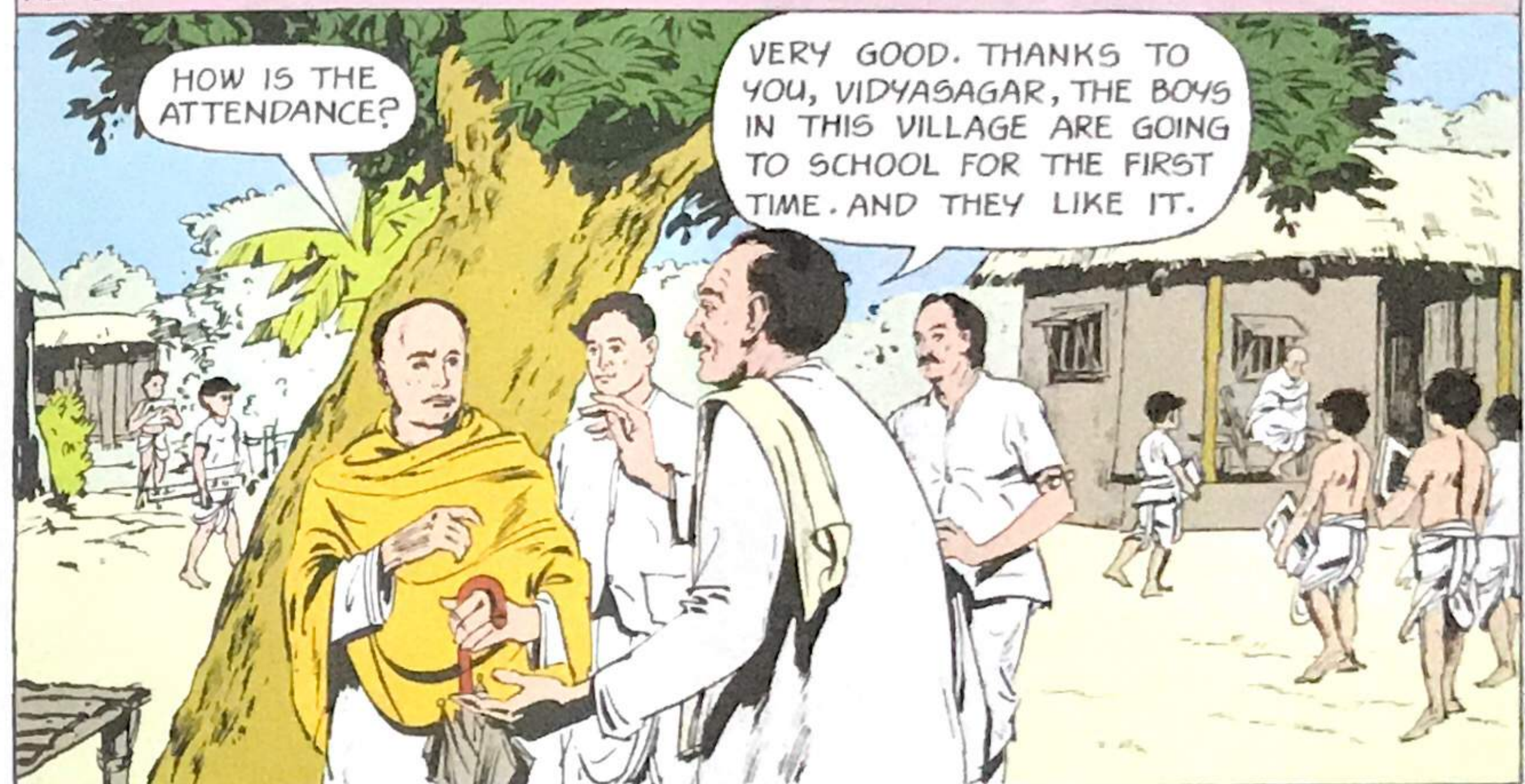
YOU - YOU NATIVE! HOW DARE YOU TREAT ME LIKE THIS!



I'M SORRY. HAVE I OFFENDED YOU? I THOUGHT THIS WAS THE HEIGHT OF GOOD MANNERS IN ENGLAND.

KERR FELT DEEPLY HUMILIATED. HE WENT AWAY A WISER MAN.

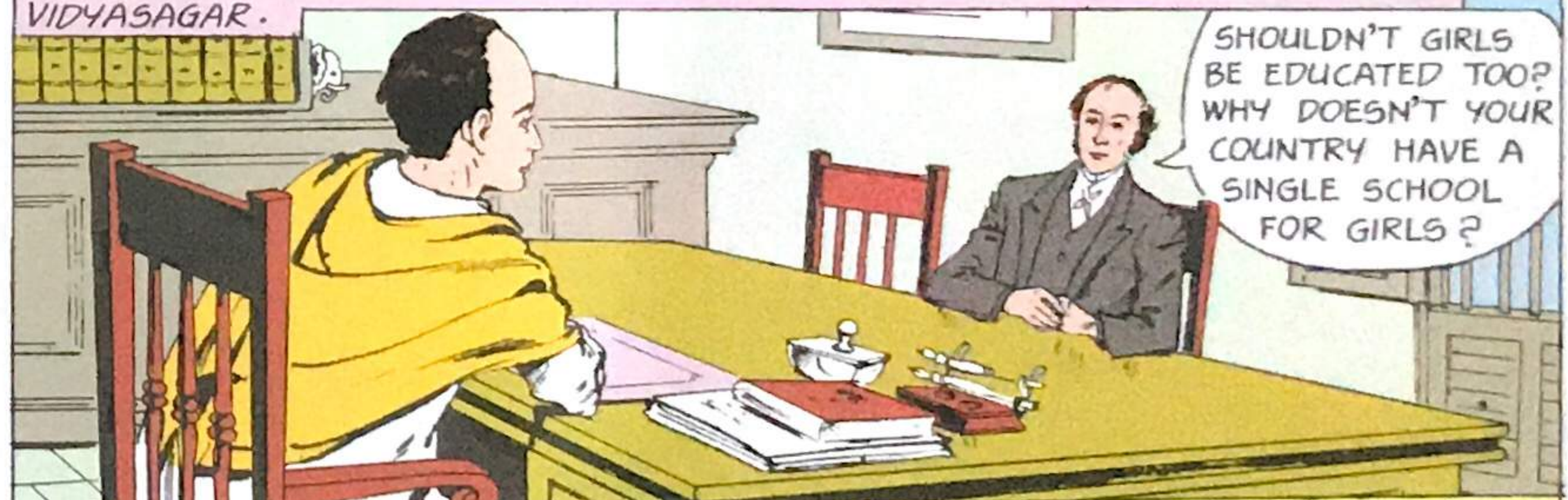
VIDYASAGAR DID NOT RESTRICT HIS ATTENTION TO COLLEGE EDUCATION ALONE. HE SET UP SCORES OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND TOOK A KEEN INTEREST IN THEM.



HOW IS THE ATTENDANCE?

VERY GOOD. THANKS TO YOU, VIDYASAGAR, THE BOYS IN THIS VILLAGE ARE GOING TO SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME. AND THEY LIKE IT.

THEN ONE DAY A MAN CALLED JOHN DRINKWATER BETHUNE CAME TO SEE VIDYASAGAR.



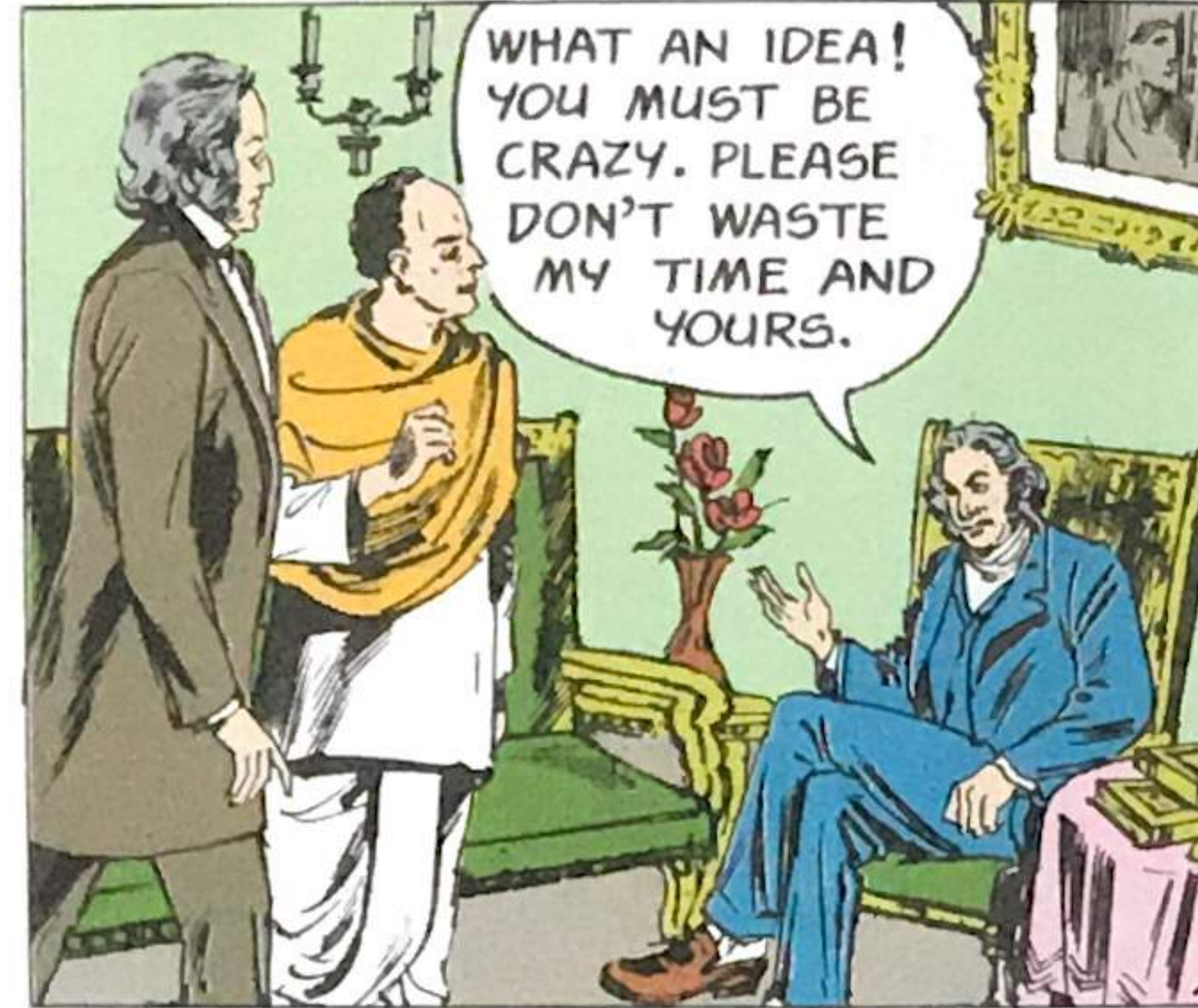
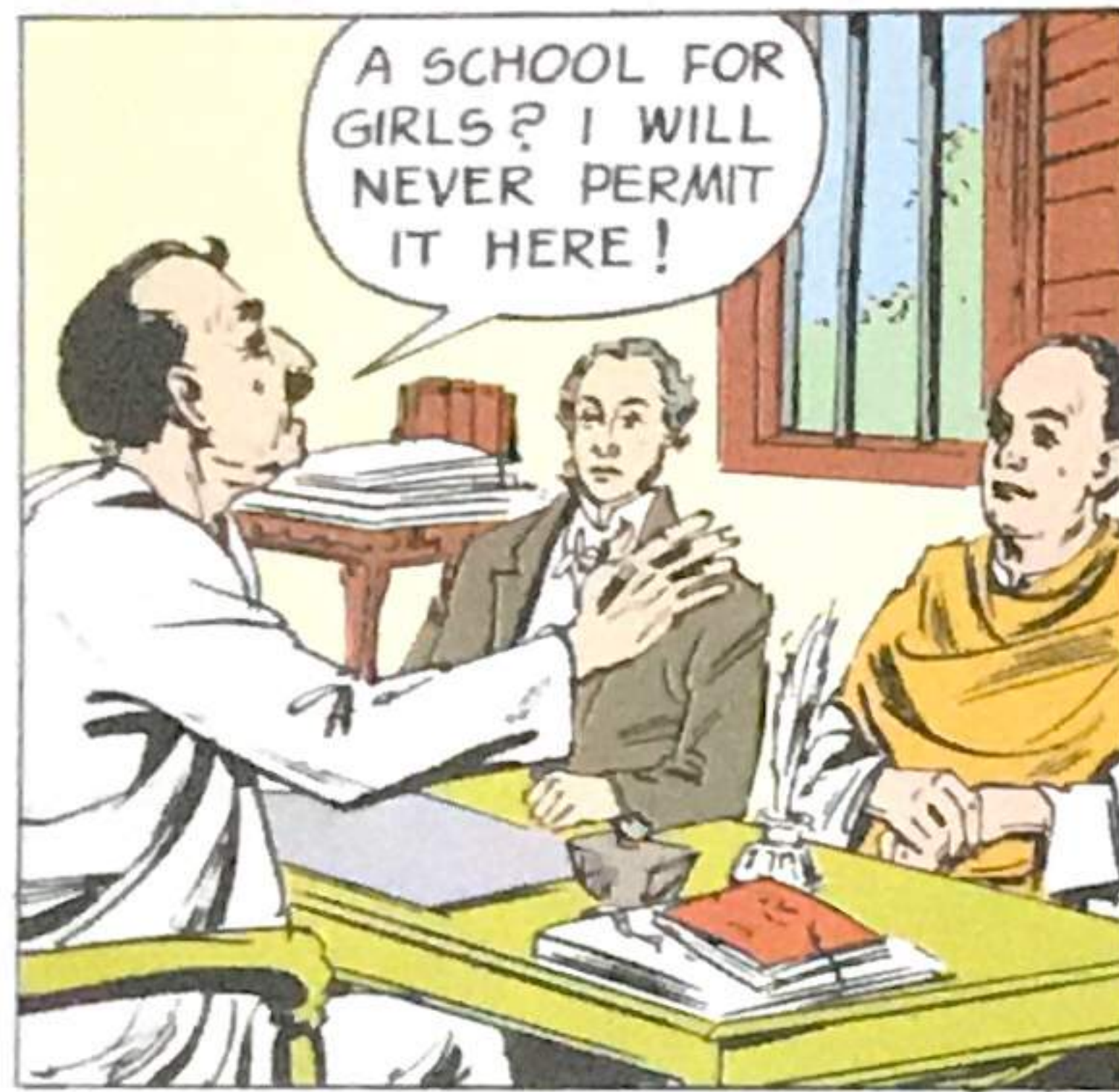
SHOULDN'T GIRLS BE EDUCATED TOO? WHY DOESN'T YOUR COUNTRY HAVE A SINGLE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS?

VIDYASAGAR WAS DELIGHTED TO MEET ANOTHER WHO SHARED HIS VIEWS.

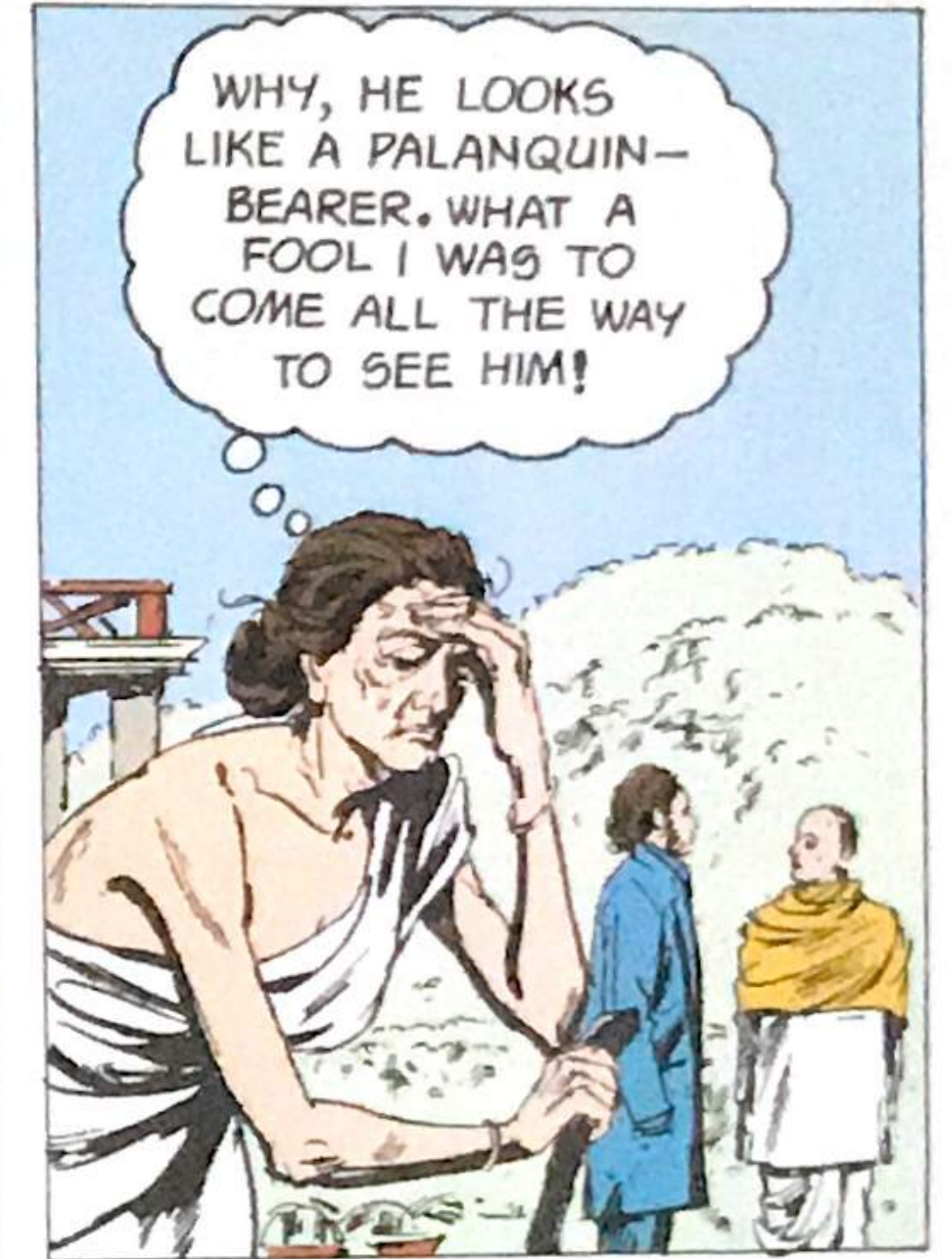
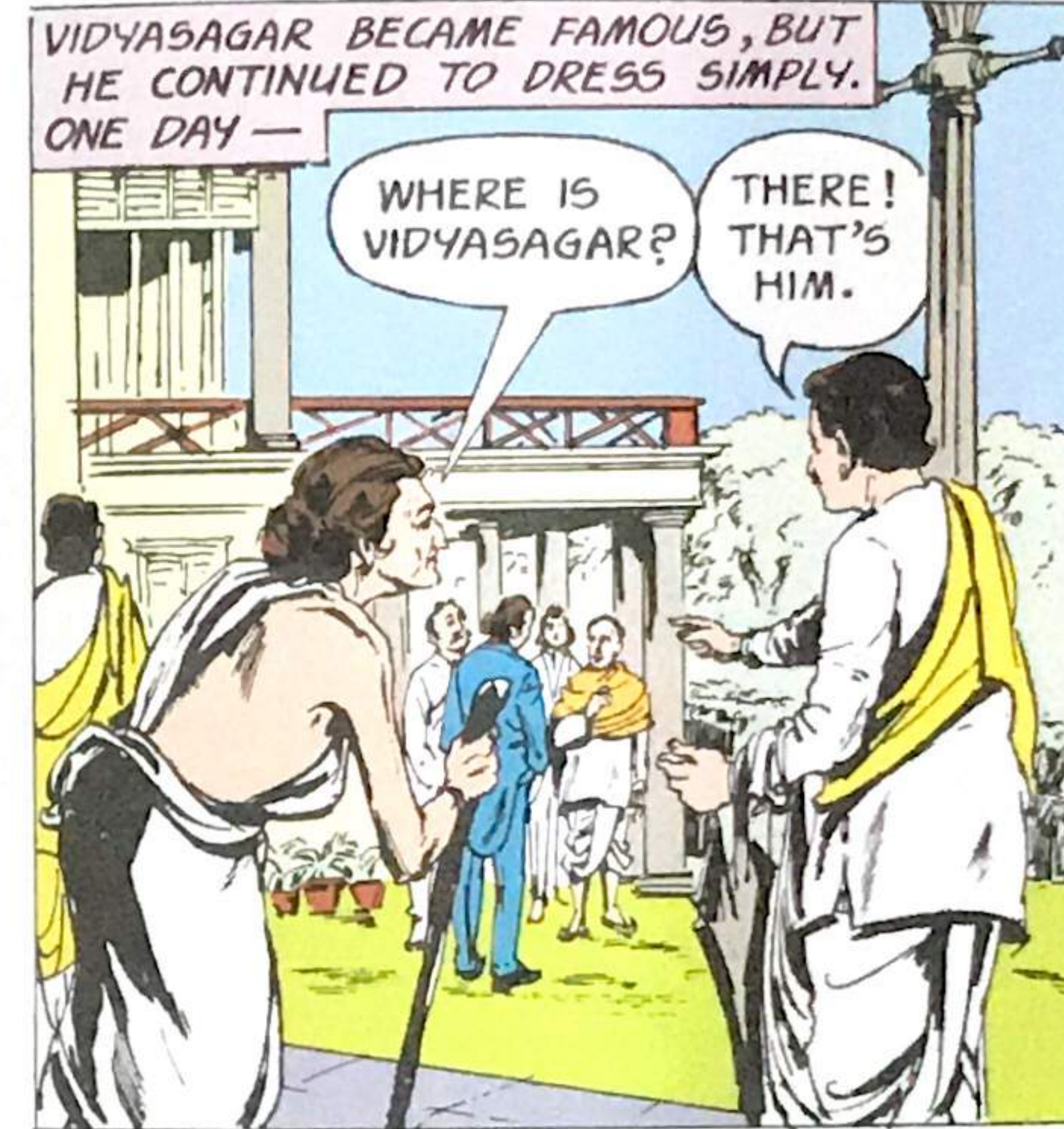
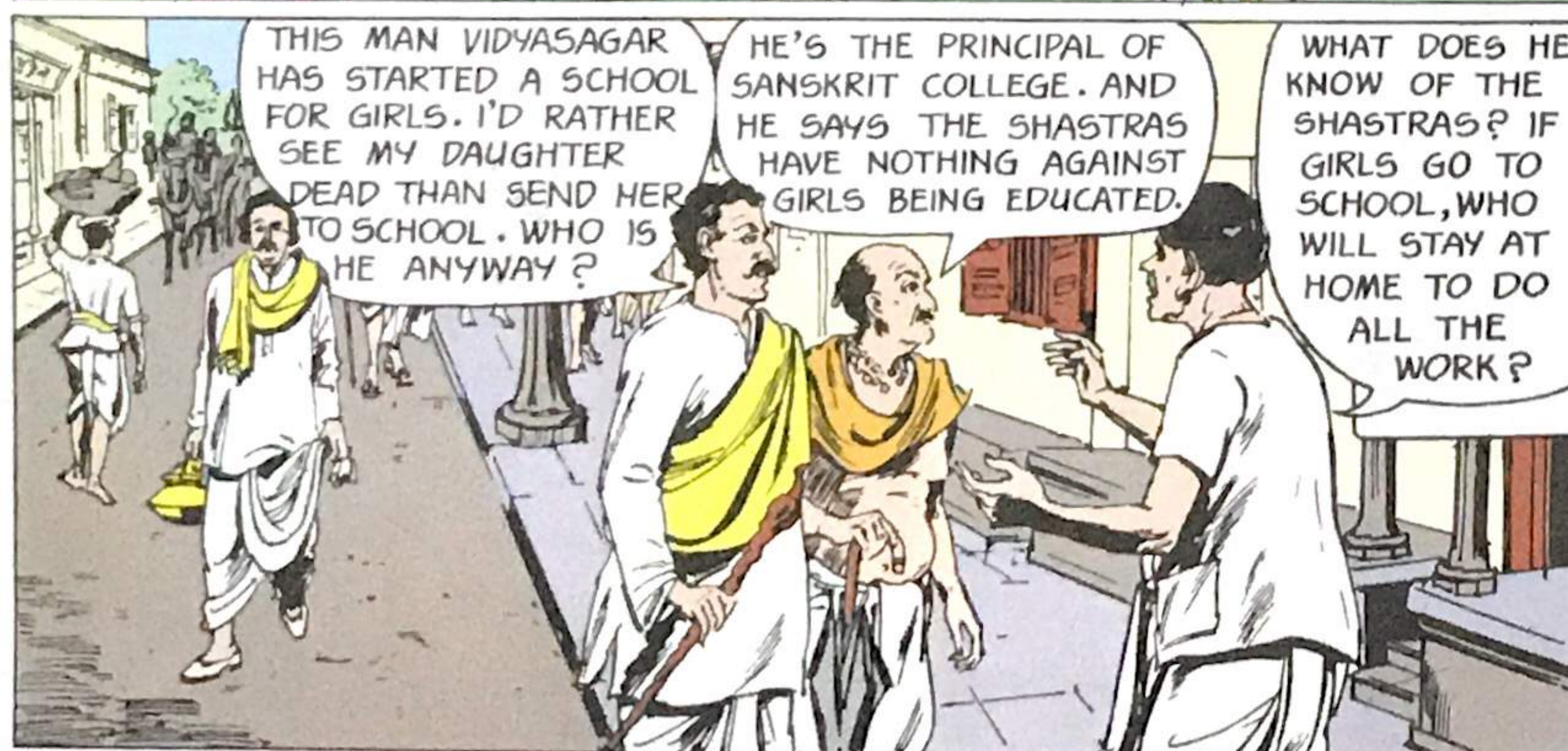


I AM PLANNING TO START ONE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

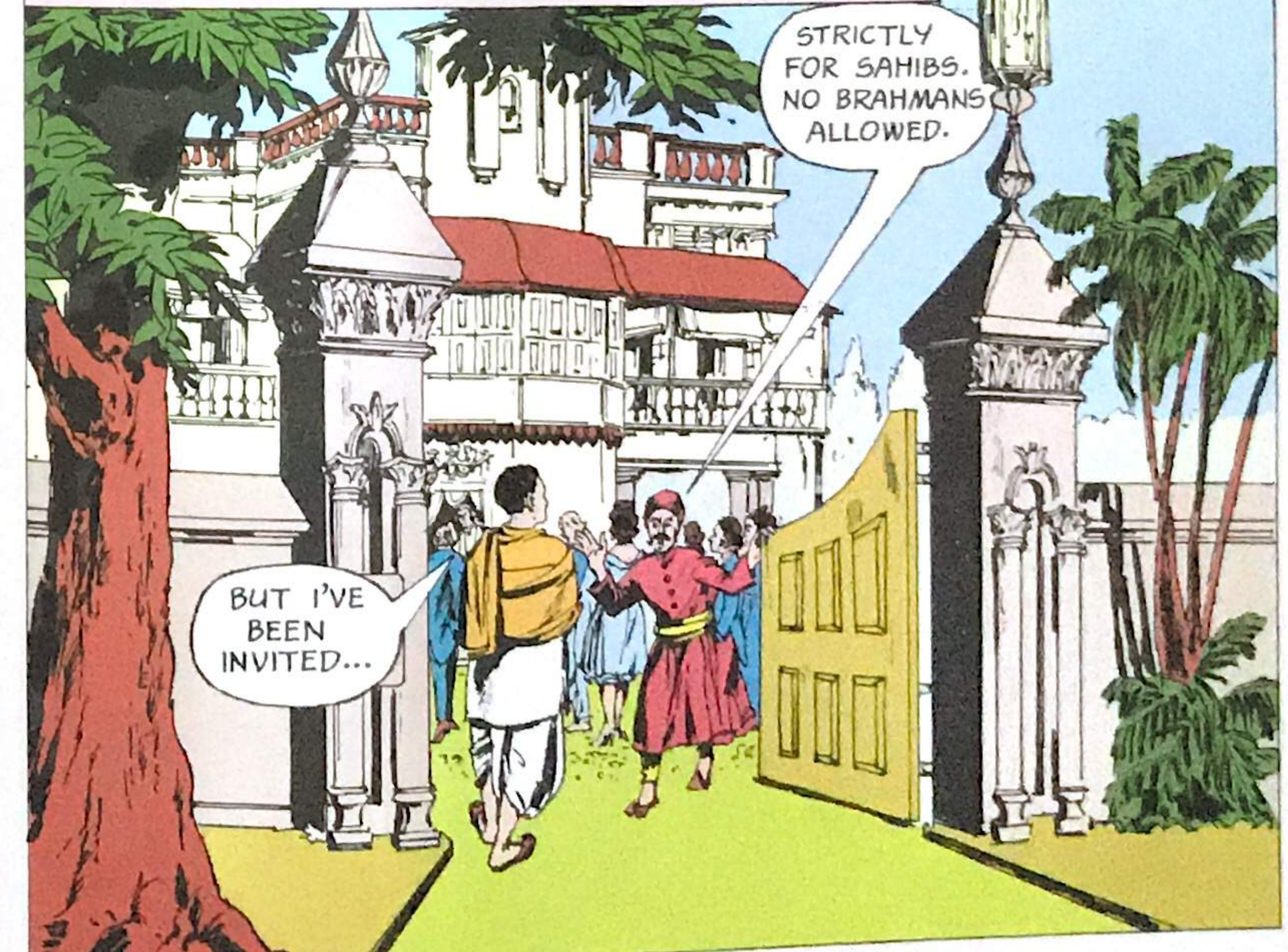
YOU ARE JUST THE MAN I WAS LOOKING FOR!



BUT VIDYASAGAR WAS NOT ONE TO BE EASILY DISCOURAGED. THE HINDU BALIKA VIDYALAYA WAS STARTED.

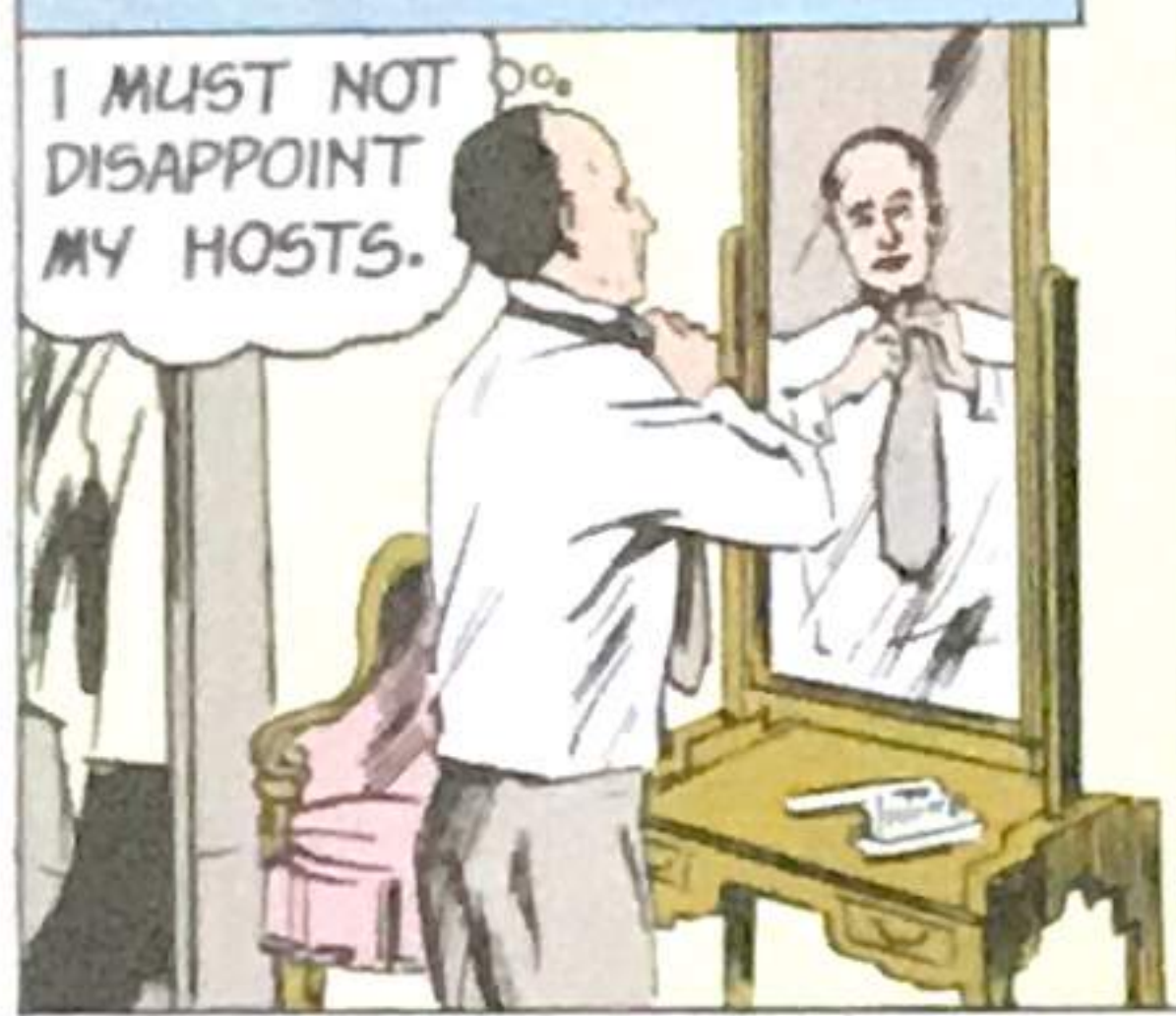


VIDYASAGAR WAS VERY PROUD OF HIS TRADITIONAL DRESS. HE WORE IT EVERYWHERE. ONCE HE WAS INVITED TO BE THE GUEST OF HONOUR AT A PARTY. YET, AT THE GATES OF THE MANSION —



VIDYASAGAR WENT HOME.

I MUST NOT DISAPPOINT MY HOSTS.

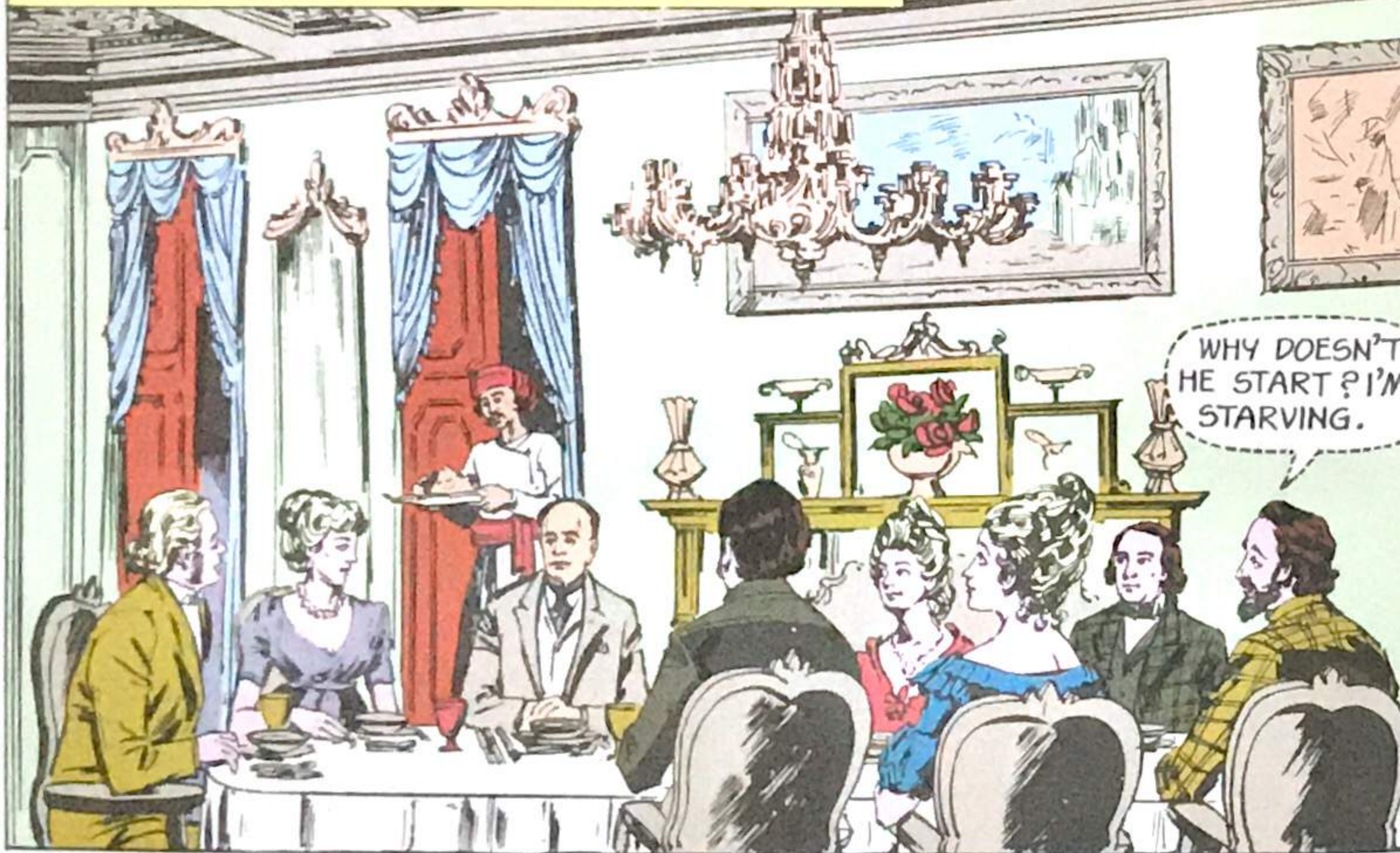


WHEN HE RETURNED THE WATCHMAN DIDN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE HIM.

THIS WAY, SIR. YES, SIR. PLEASE GO IN, SIR.



THEY SAT DOWN TO DINNER AND LOOKED TO VIDYASAGAR, THE CHIEF GUEST, TO START IT. BUT HE MADE NO MOVE.



WHY DOESN'T HE START? I'M STARVING.



WHY DON'T YOU EAT? DON'T YOU FIND THE FOOD TASTY ENOUGH?



HAS HE GONE CRAZY?

I SHOULD THINK SO.

THEN VIDYASAGAR EXPLAINED.

WHEN I CAME HERE IN A DHOTI, I WAS NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER. BUT ONCE I HAD CHANGED INTO EUROPEAN CLOTHES I WAS WELCOMED!



THEY UNDERSTOOD.

I AM SORRY, VIDYASAGAR.

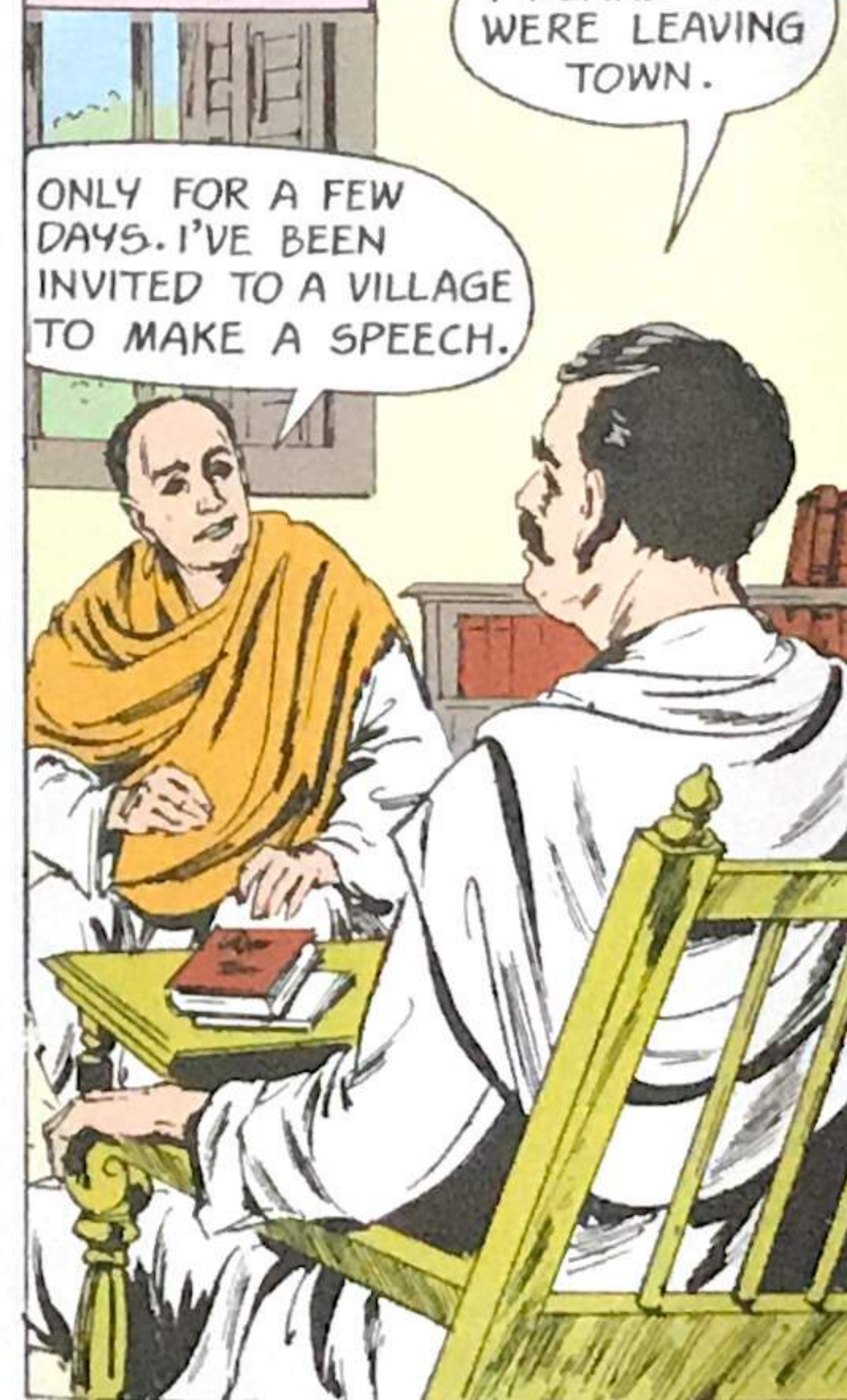


I REALISED THEN THAT IT WAS THE CLOTHES THAT WERE INVITED AND NOT THE MAN WEARING THEM.

ONE DAY —

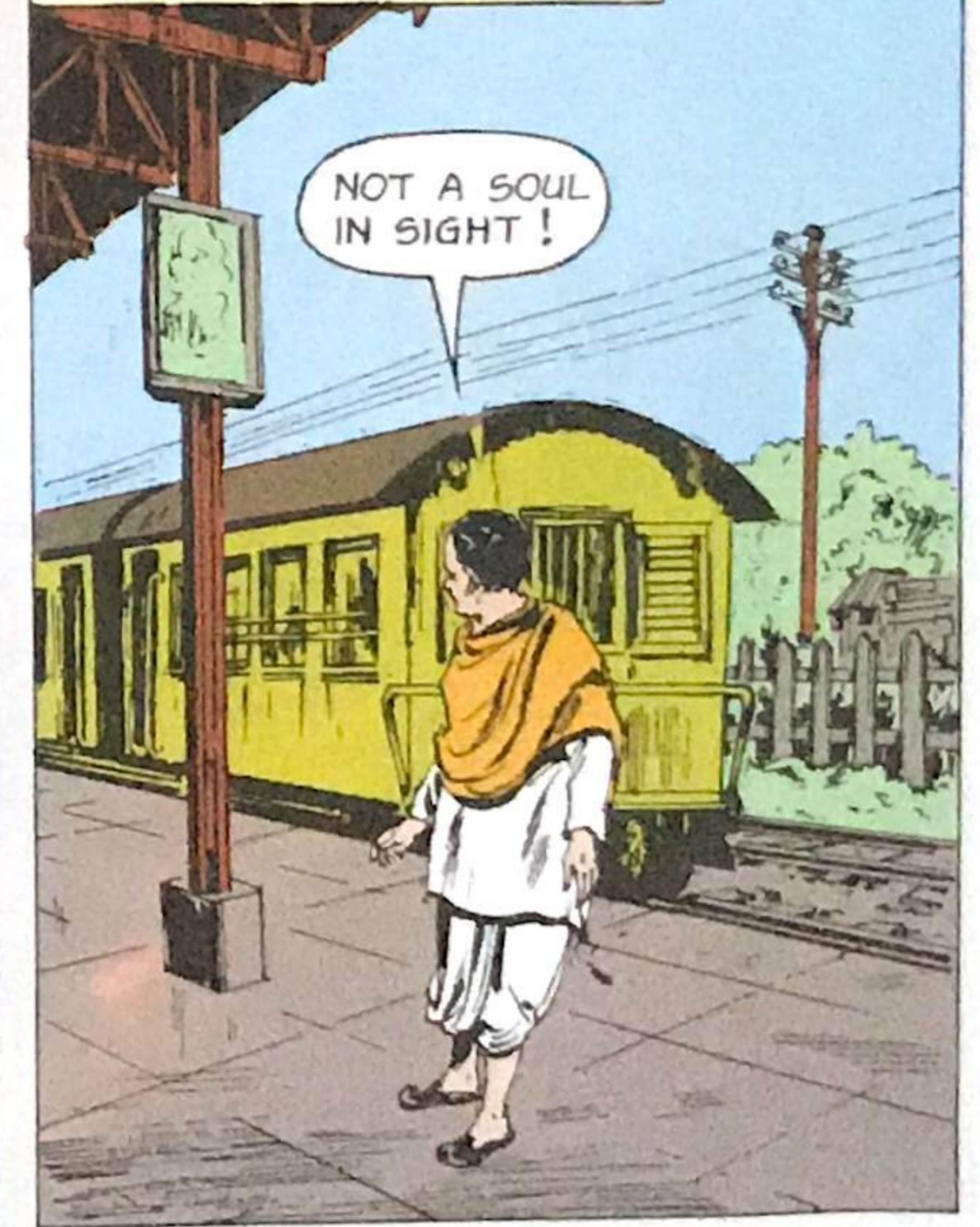
I HEARD YOU WERE LEAVING TOWN.

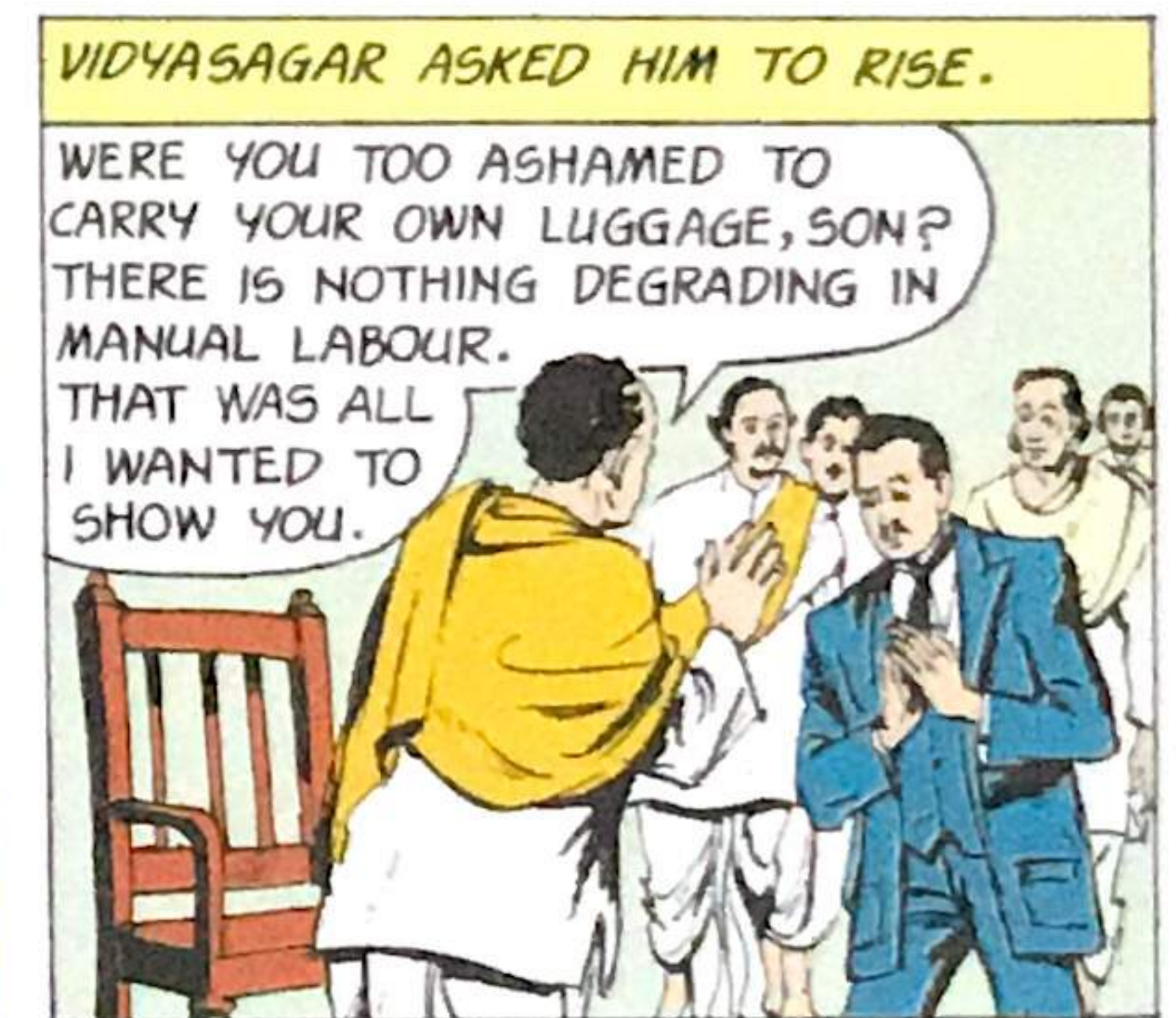
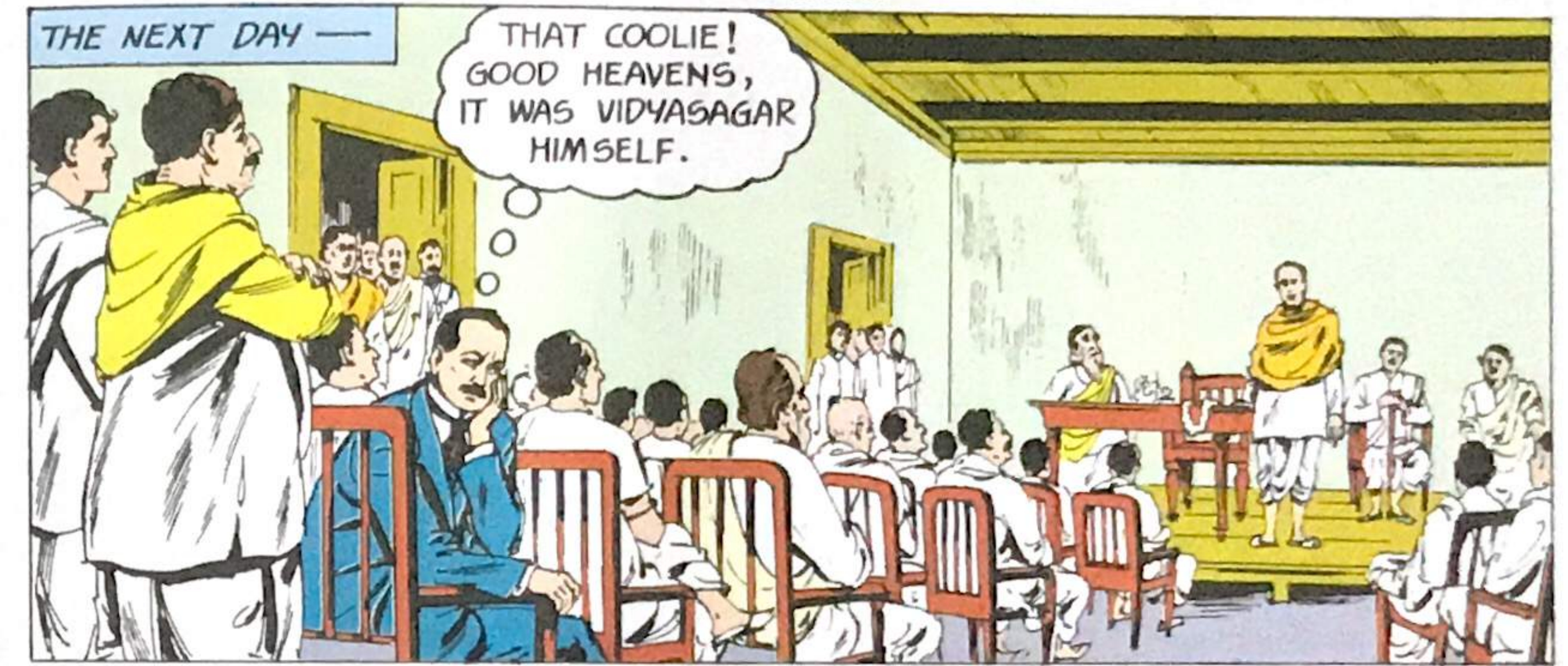
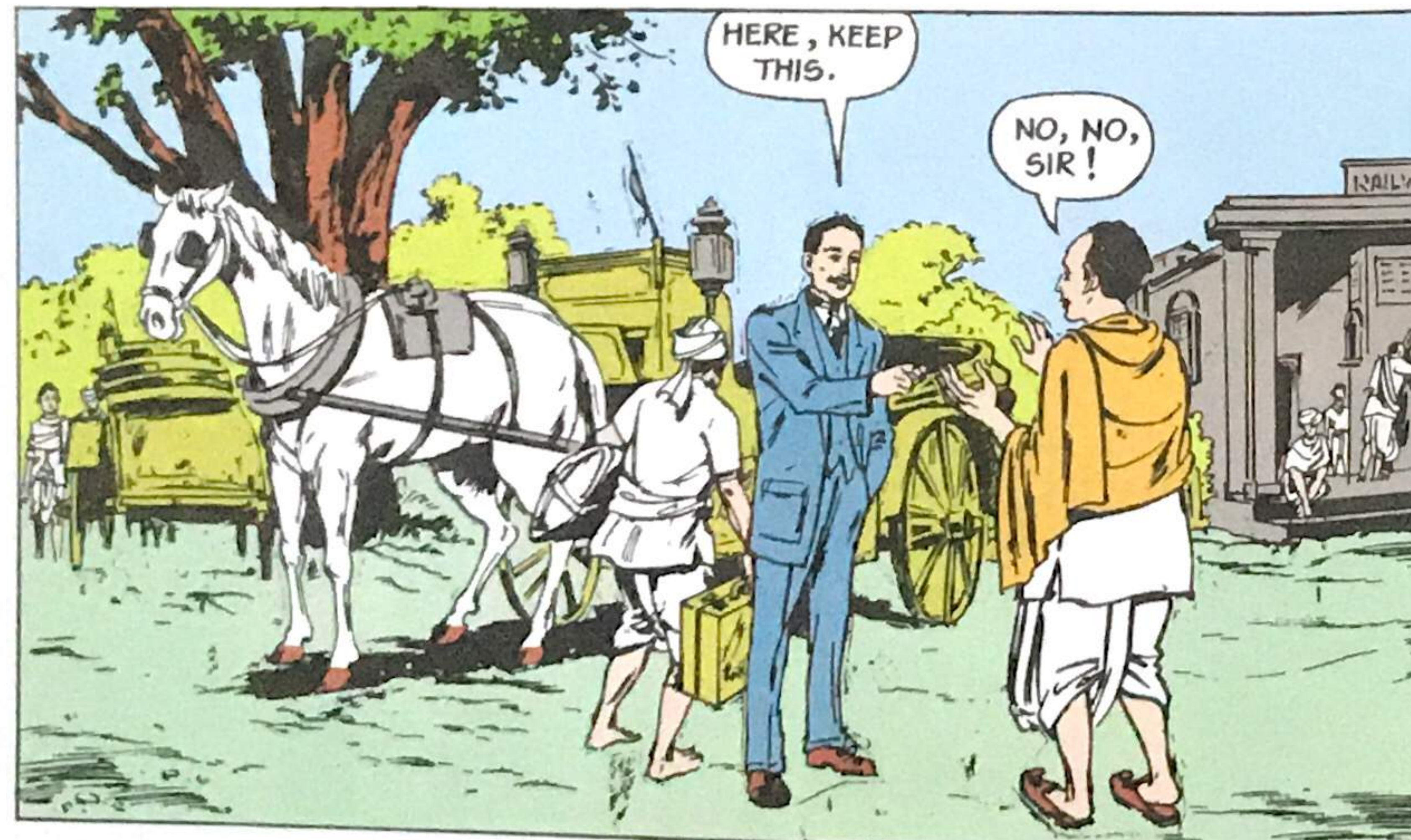
ONLY FOR A FEW DAYS. I'VE BEEN INVITED TO A VILLAGE TO MAKE A SPEECH.



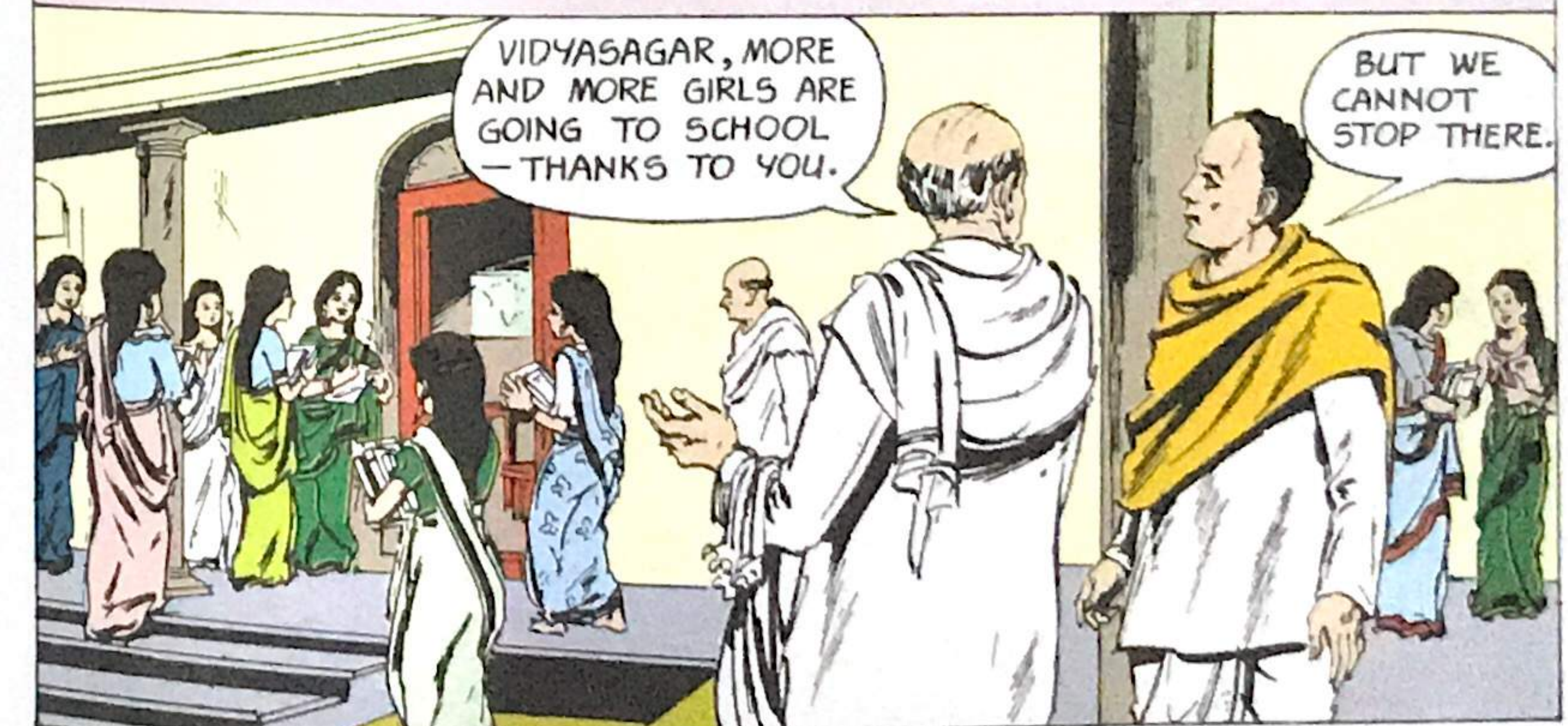
VIDYASAGAR WENT BY TRAIN. HE ALIGHTED AT A DESERTED PLATFORM.

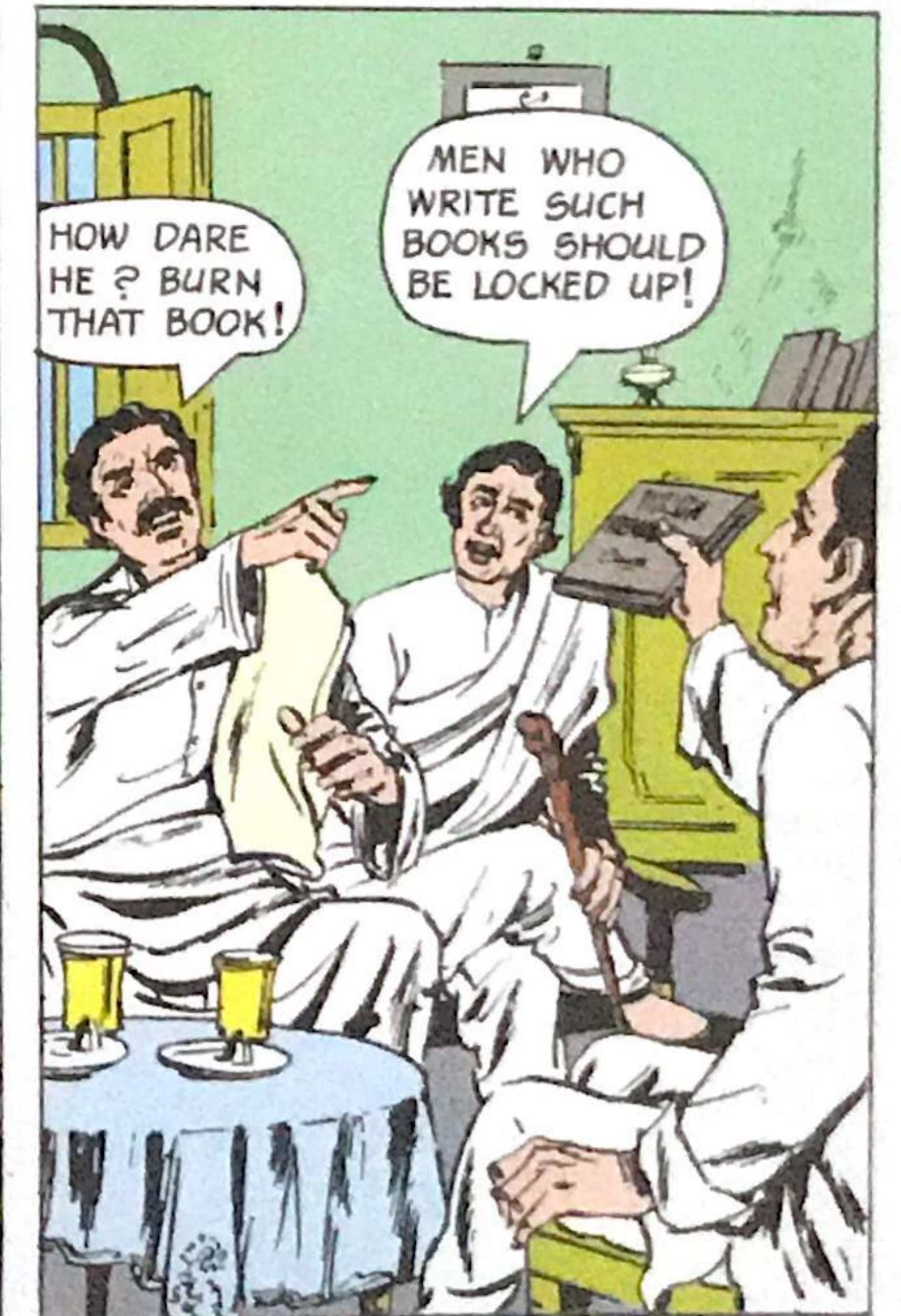
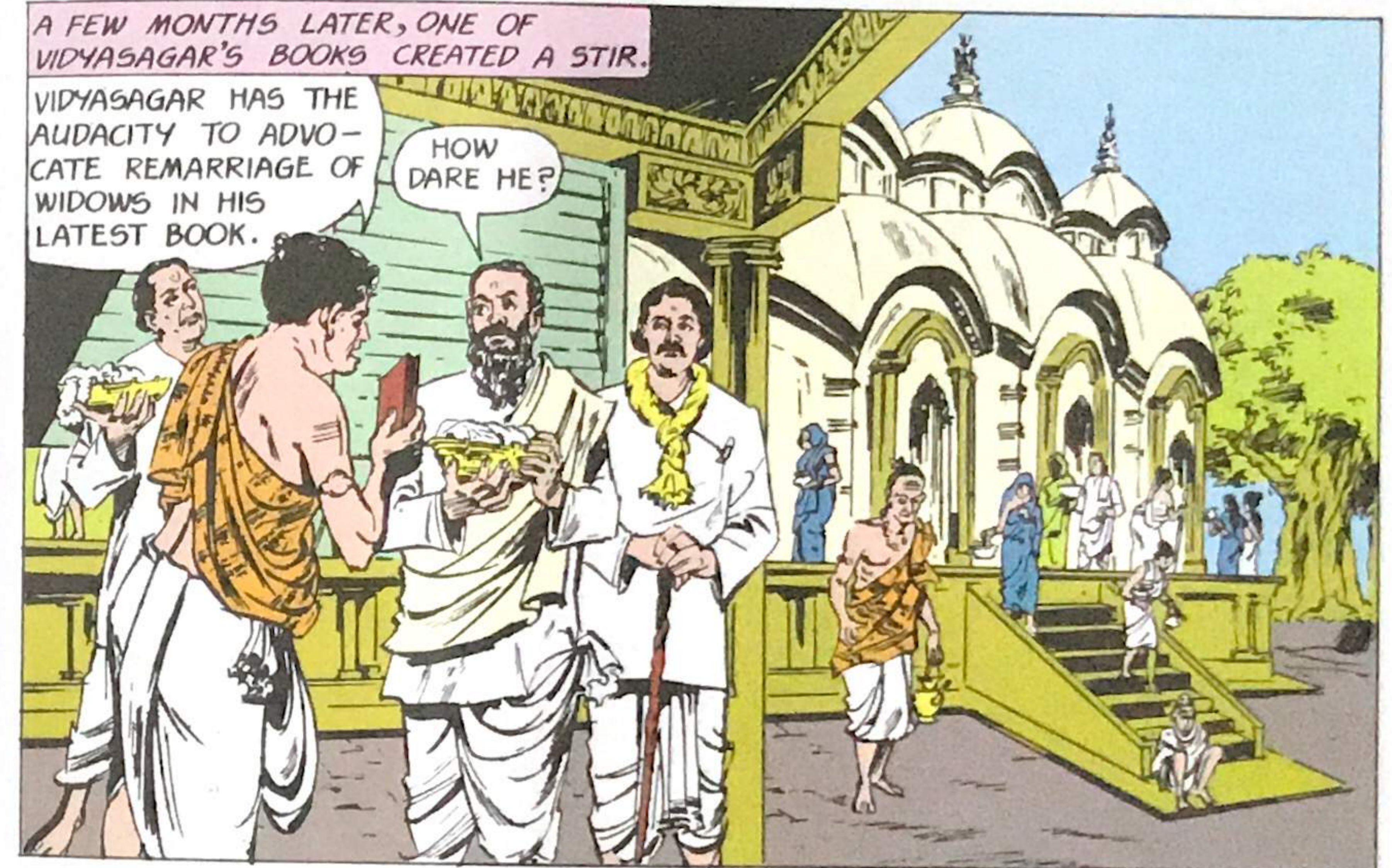
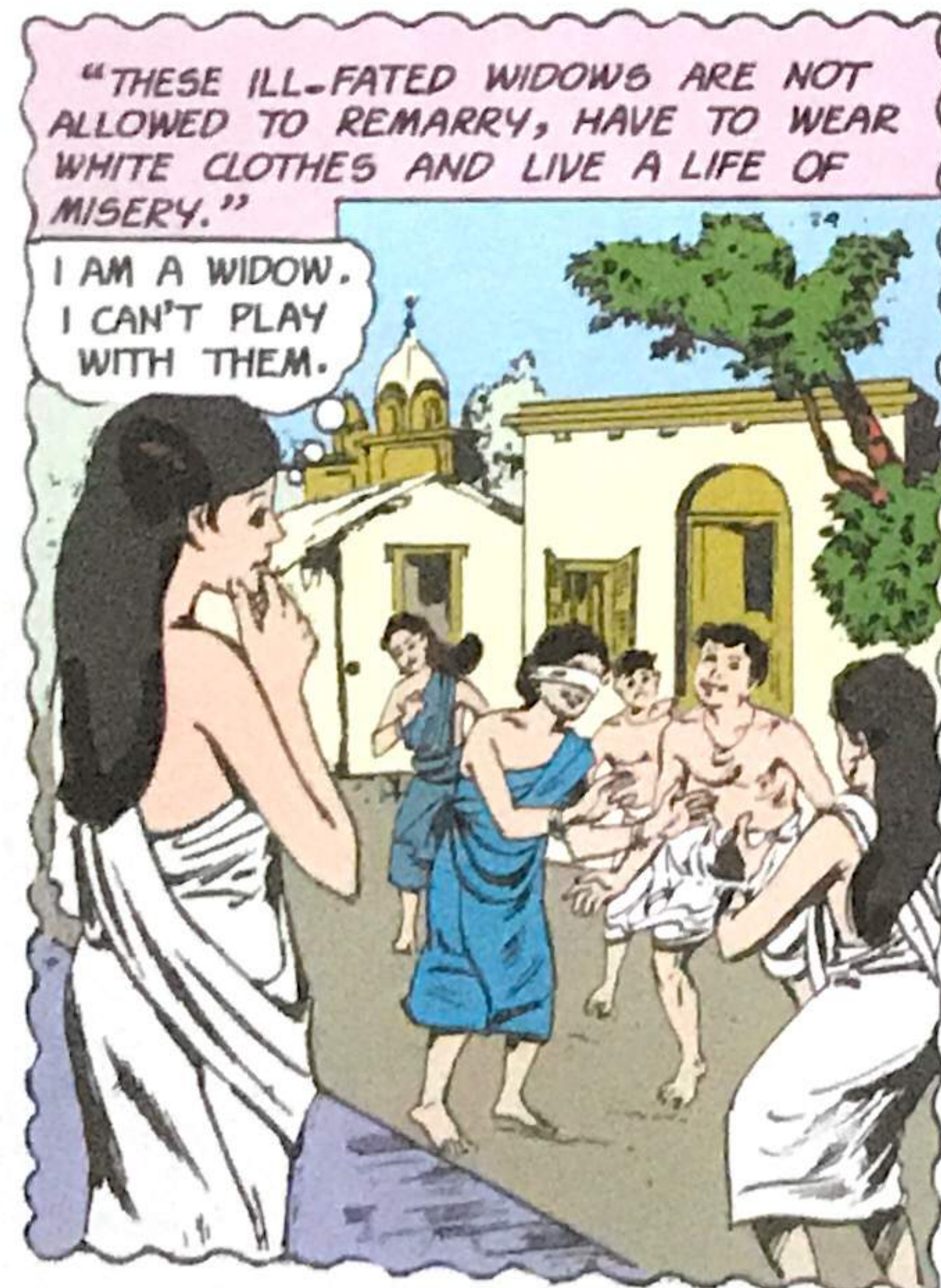
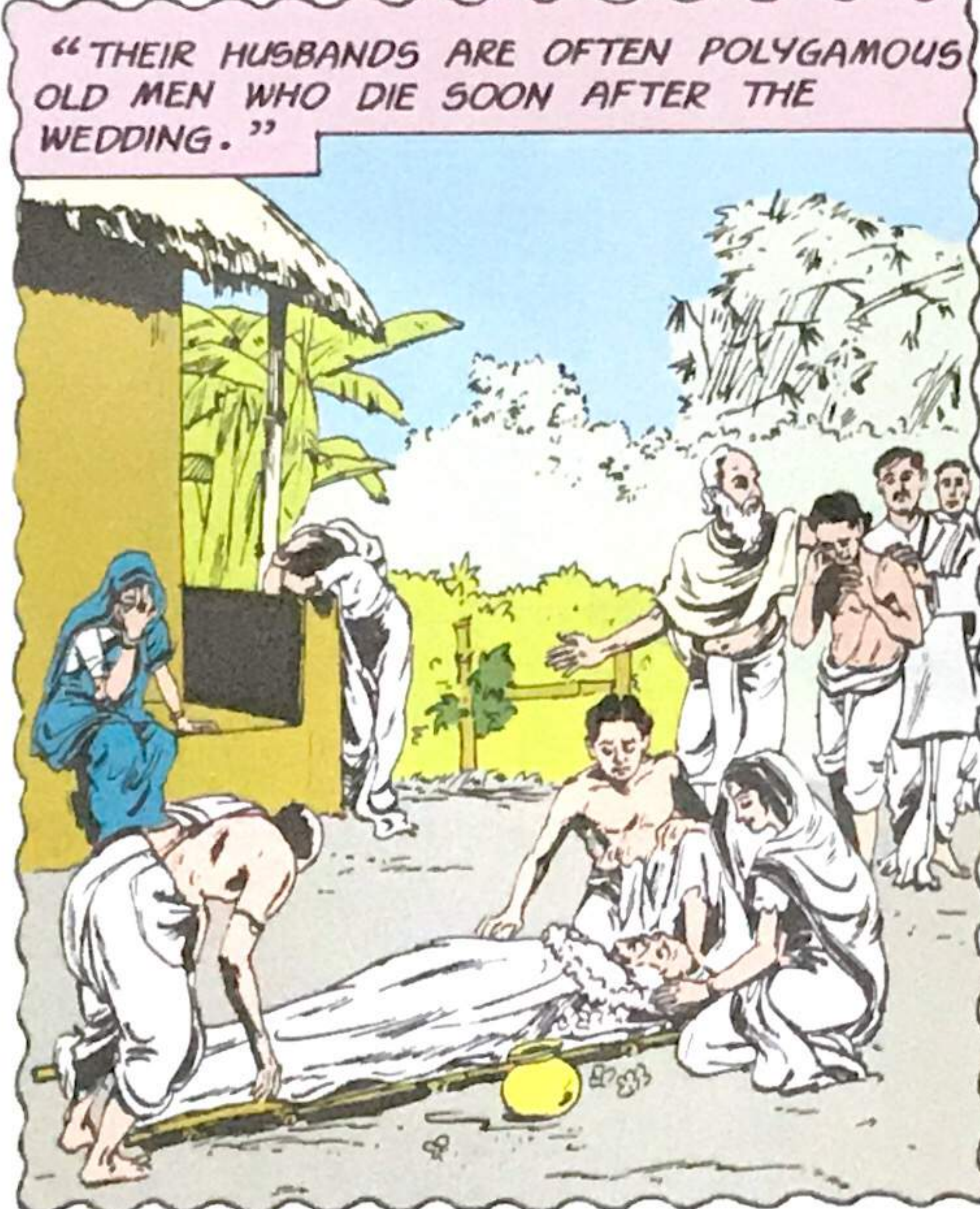
NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT!

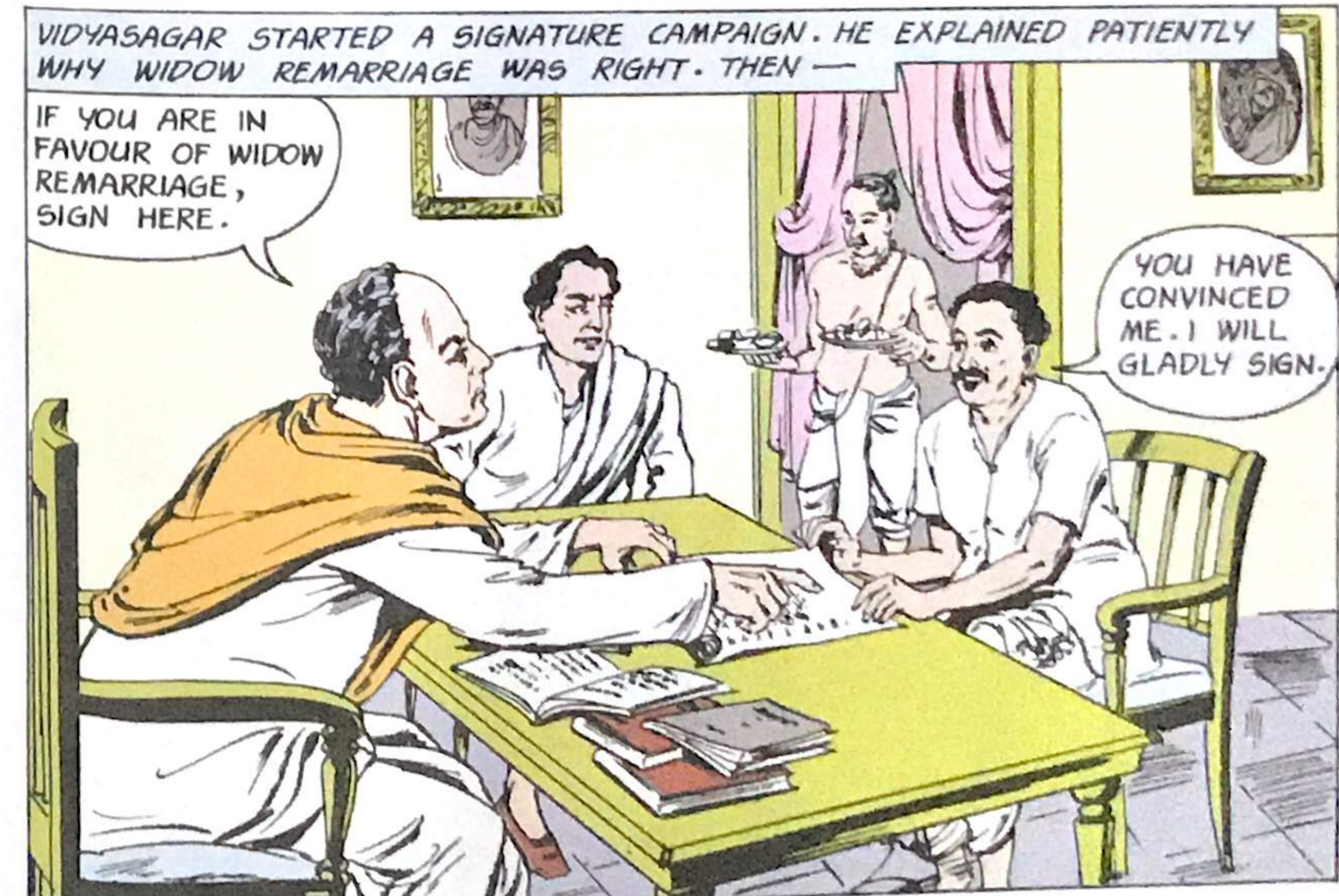
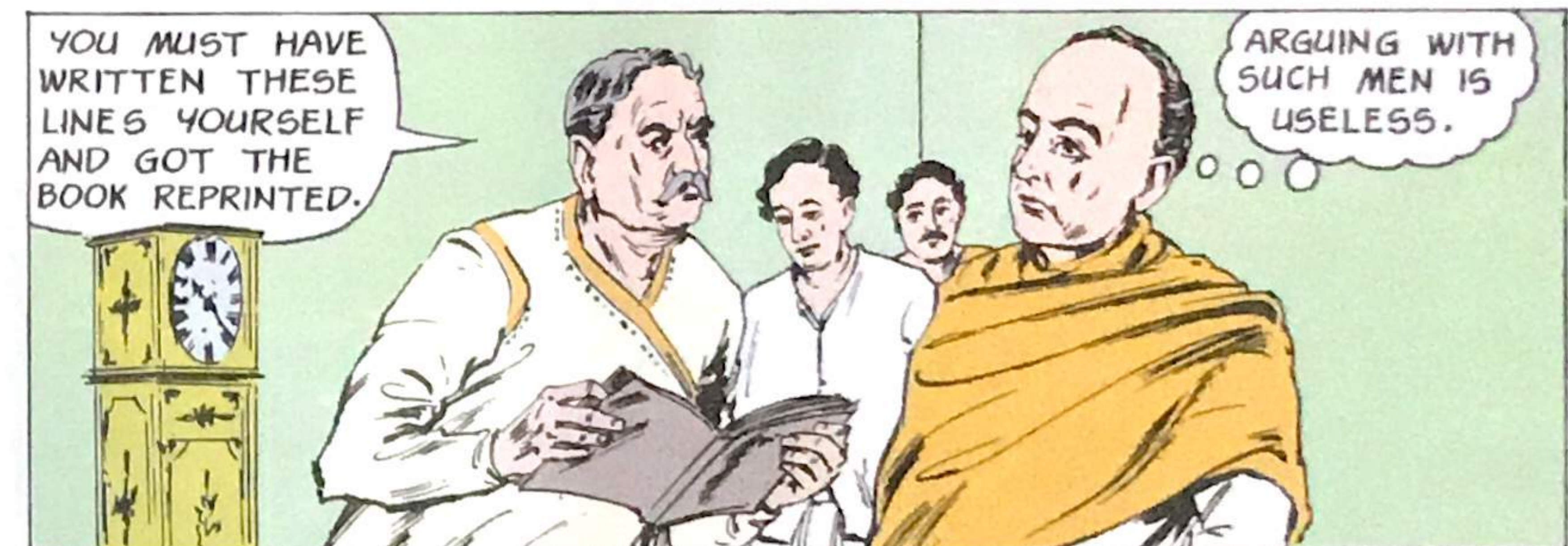
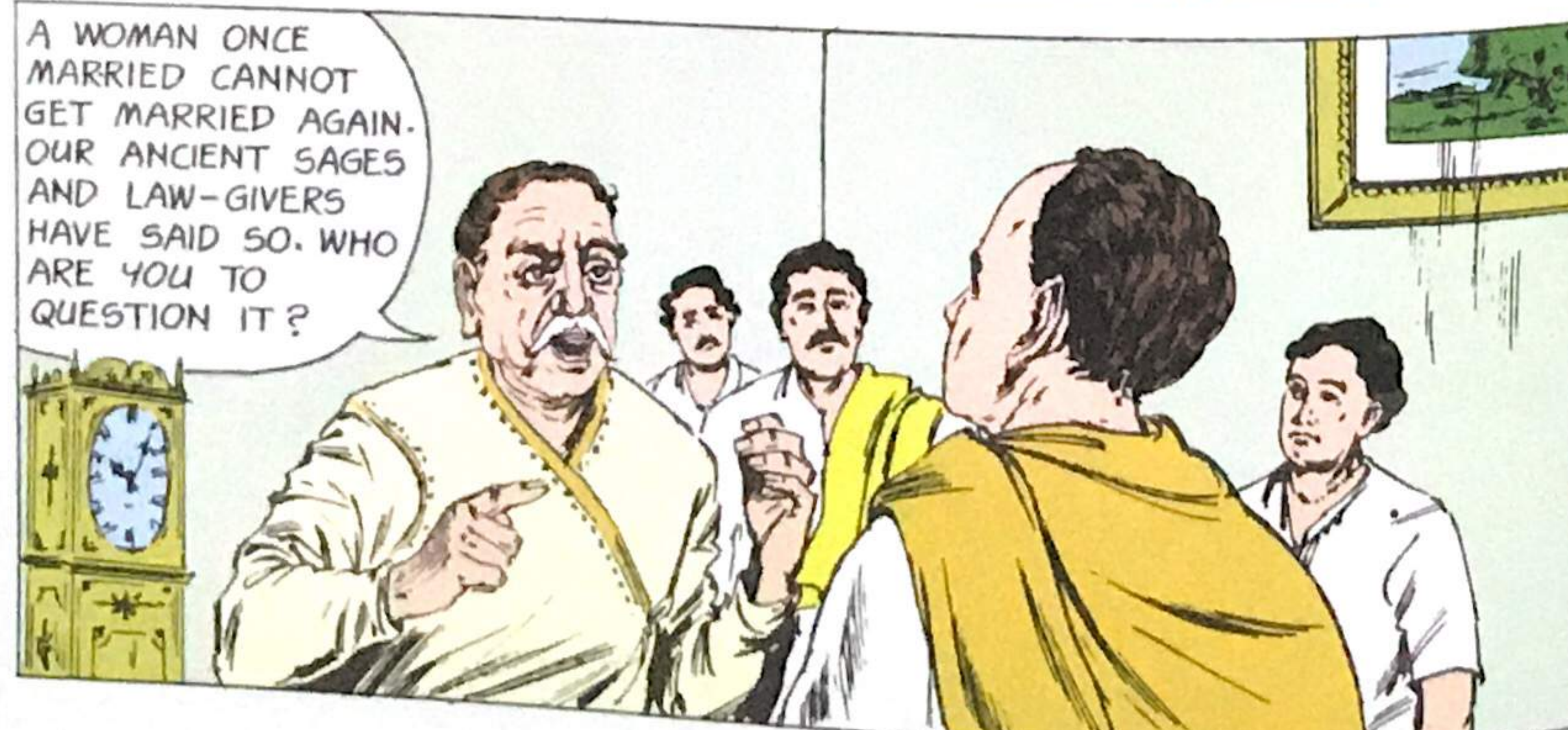
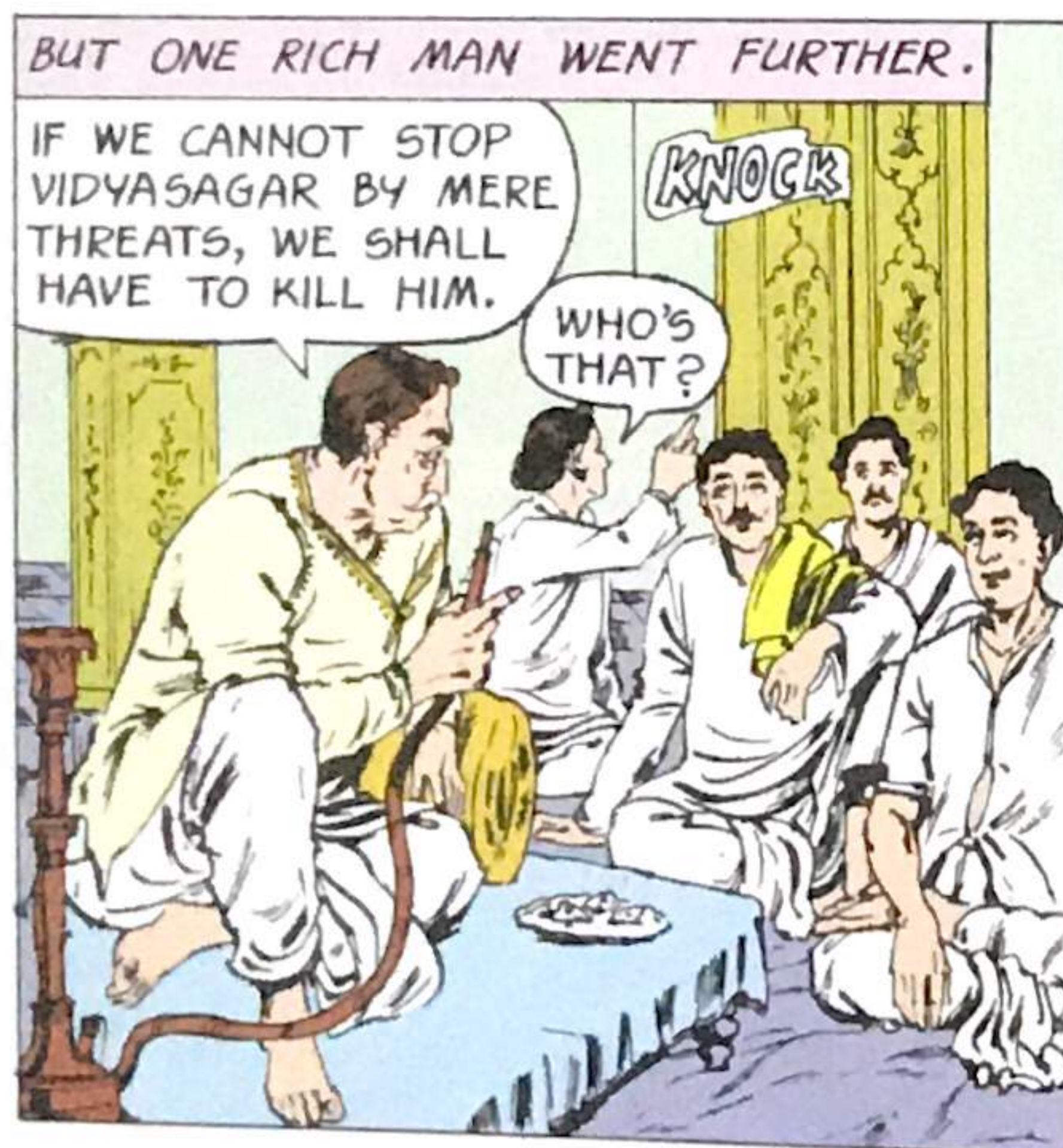
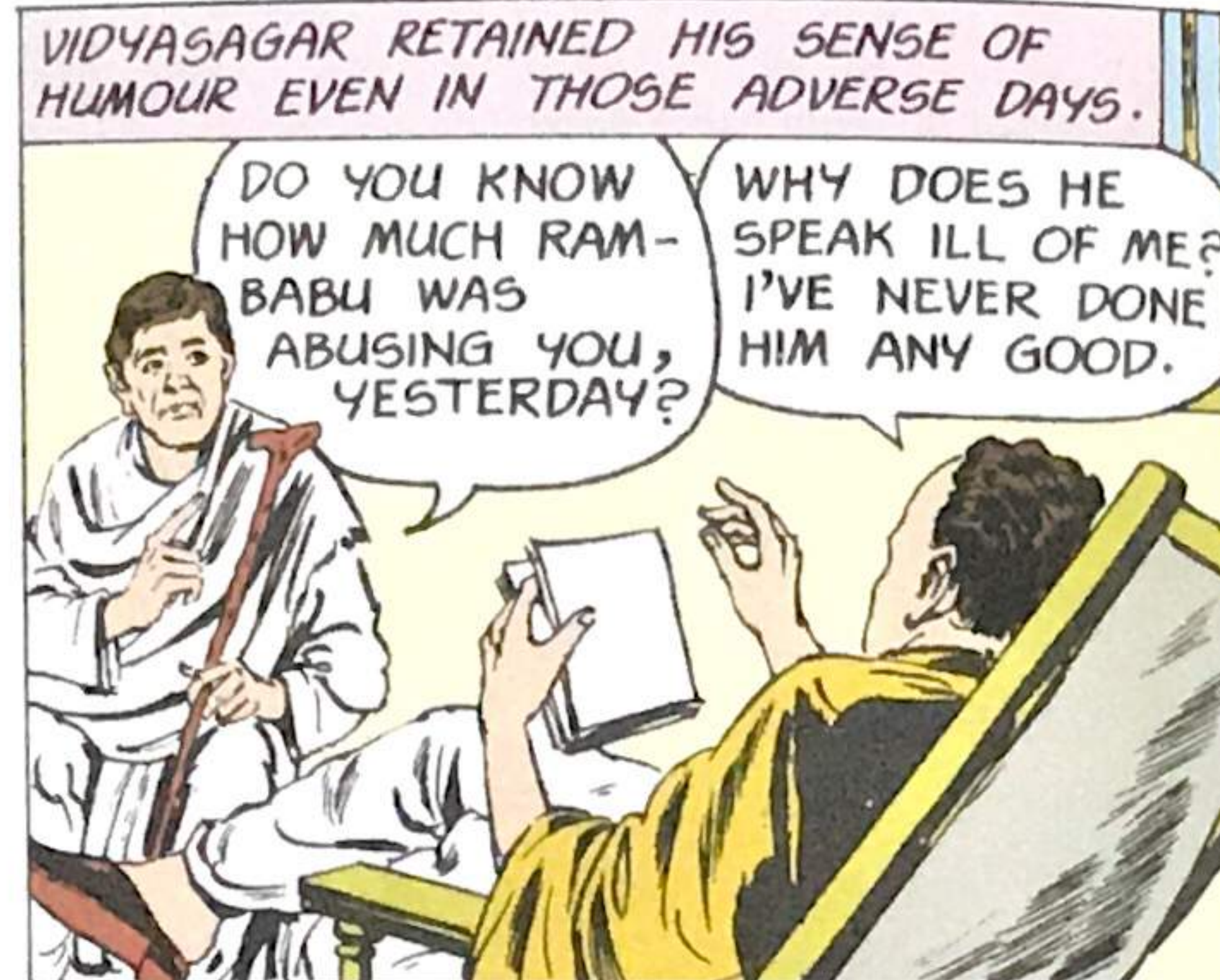
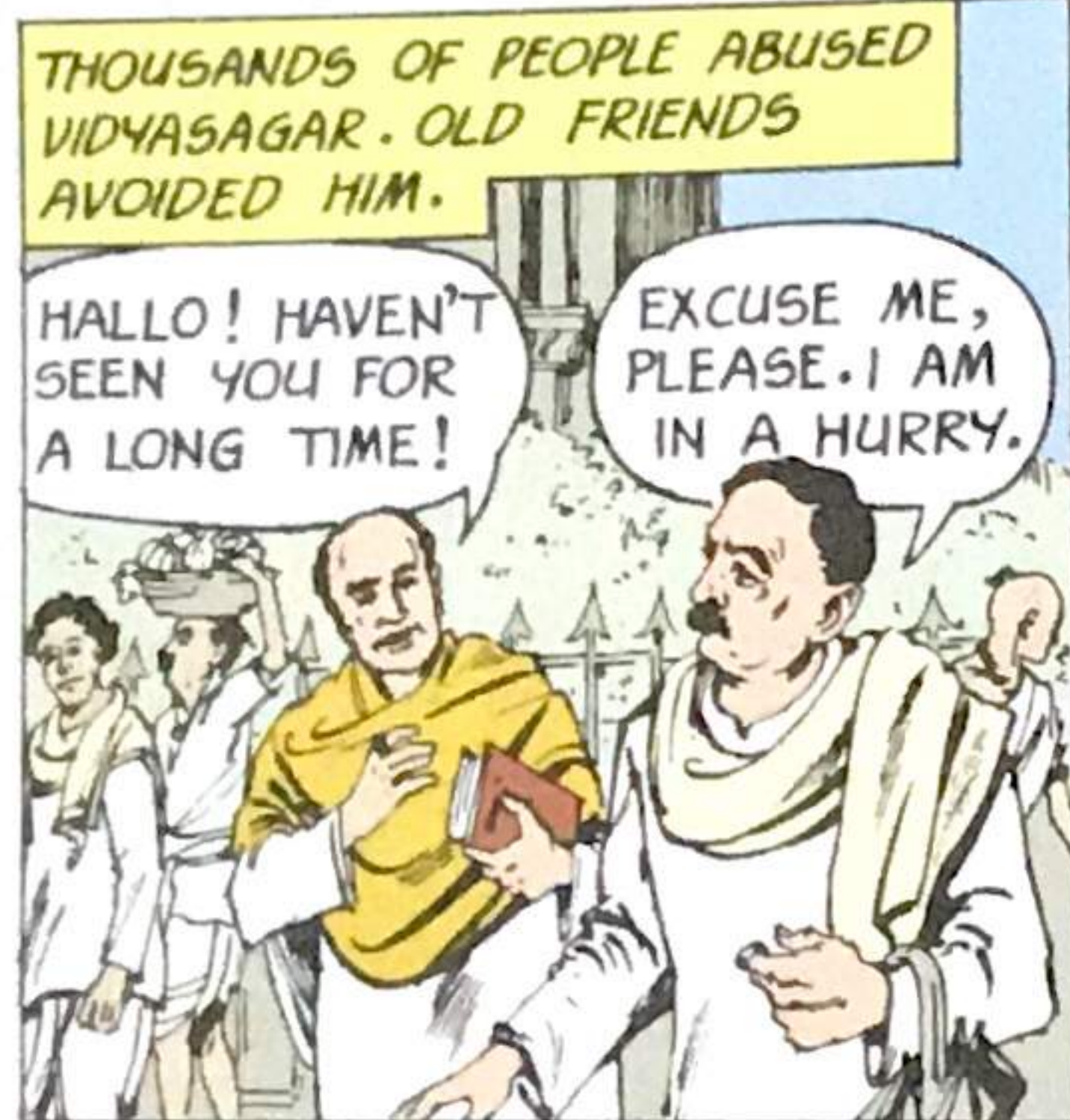




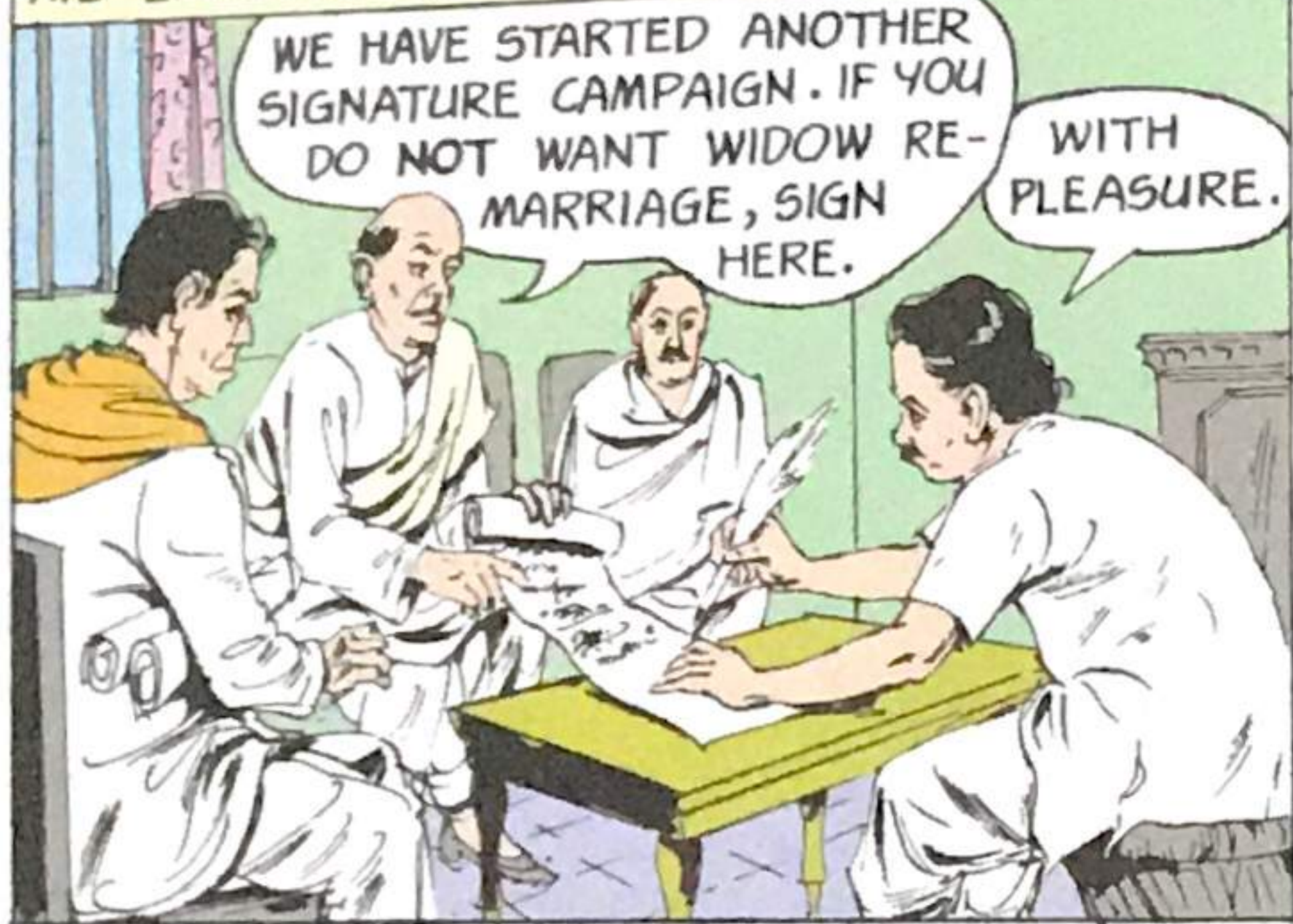
MEANWHILE HIS WORK IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION CONTINUED. THE GOVERNMENT PROMISED HIM FINANCIAL HELP. MORE AND MORE GIRLS' SCHOOLS WERE STARTED.







HIS ENEMIES WERE INCENSED.



WE HAVE STARTED ANOTHER SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN. IF YOU DO NOT WANT WIDOW REMARRIAGE, SIGN HERE.

WITH PLEASURE.

VIDYASAGAR WAS IN DESPAIR.

THEY HAVE COLLECTED MANY MORE SIGNATURES. THE GOVERNMENT WILL SUPPORT THEM. WHAT AM I TO DO NOW?



BUT WHEN THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S COUNCIL MET TO DECIDE THE MATTER—

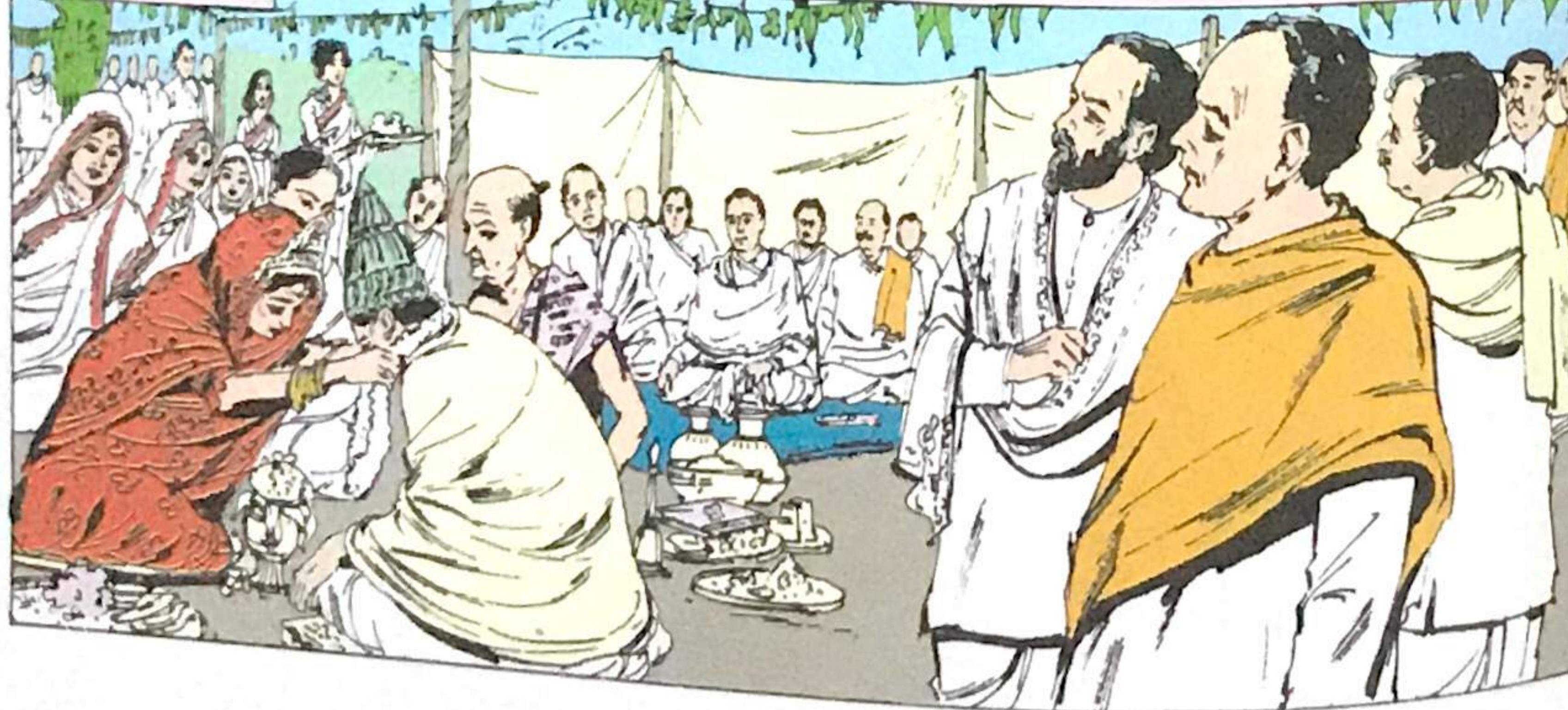


THOSE IN FAVOUR OF THE BILL RAISE YOUR HANDS.

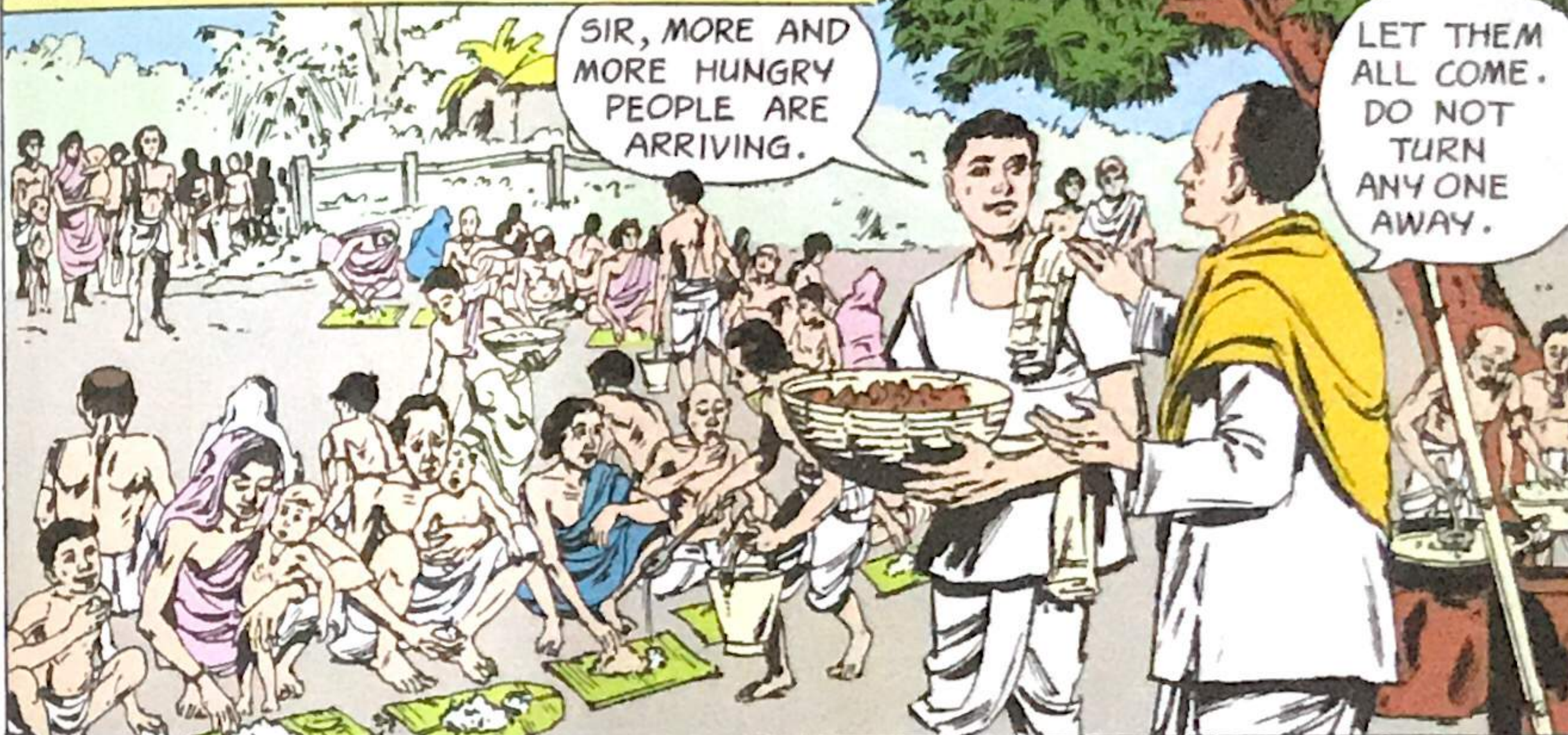
VIDYASAGAR IS A PROGRESSIVE. I'M GLAD WE HAVE SUPPORTED HIM.

THUS ON NOVEMBER 17, 1855 THE BILL VALIDATING WIDOW REMARRIAGE WAS PASSED.

MONTHS LATER THE FIRST WIDOW REMARRIAGE TOOK PLACE. SHIRISH CHANDRA VIDYARATNA MARRIED THE WIDOW, KALIMATI DEVI. VIDYASAGAR ARRANGED EVERYTHING.

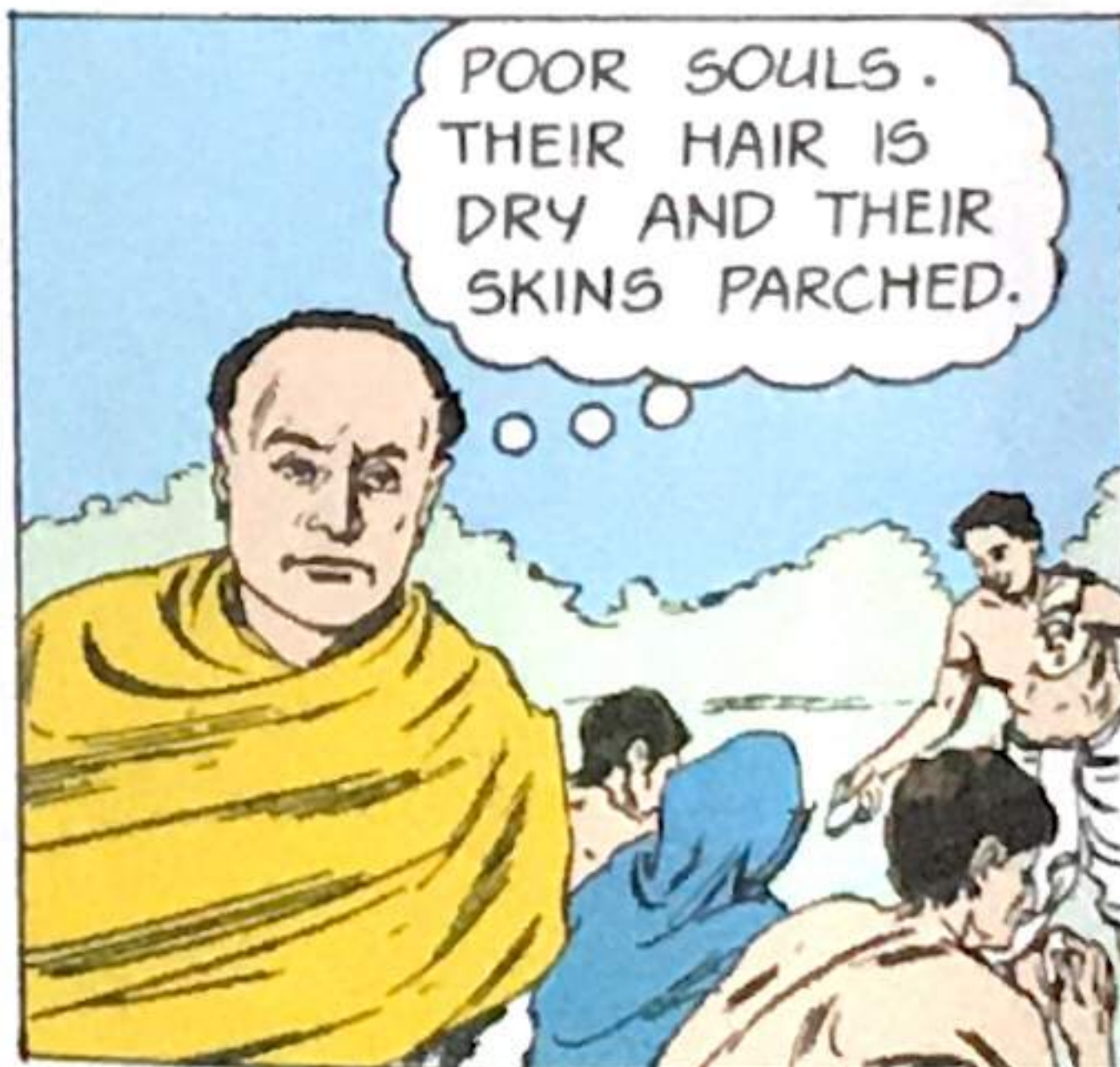


THEN, IN 1866-67 CAME THE GREAT FAMINE. THE RAINS FAILED, THE CROPS WITHERED AND MANY PEOPLE DIED OF STARVATION. VIDYASAGAR STARTED A FREE KITCHEN IN HIS VILLAGE—BIRINGA. TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY NEEDY MEN AND WOMEN WERE FED EACH DAY.

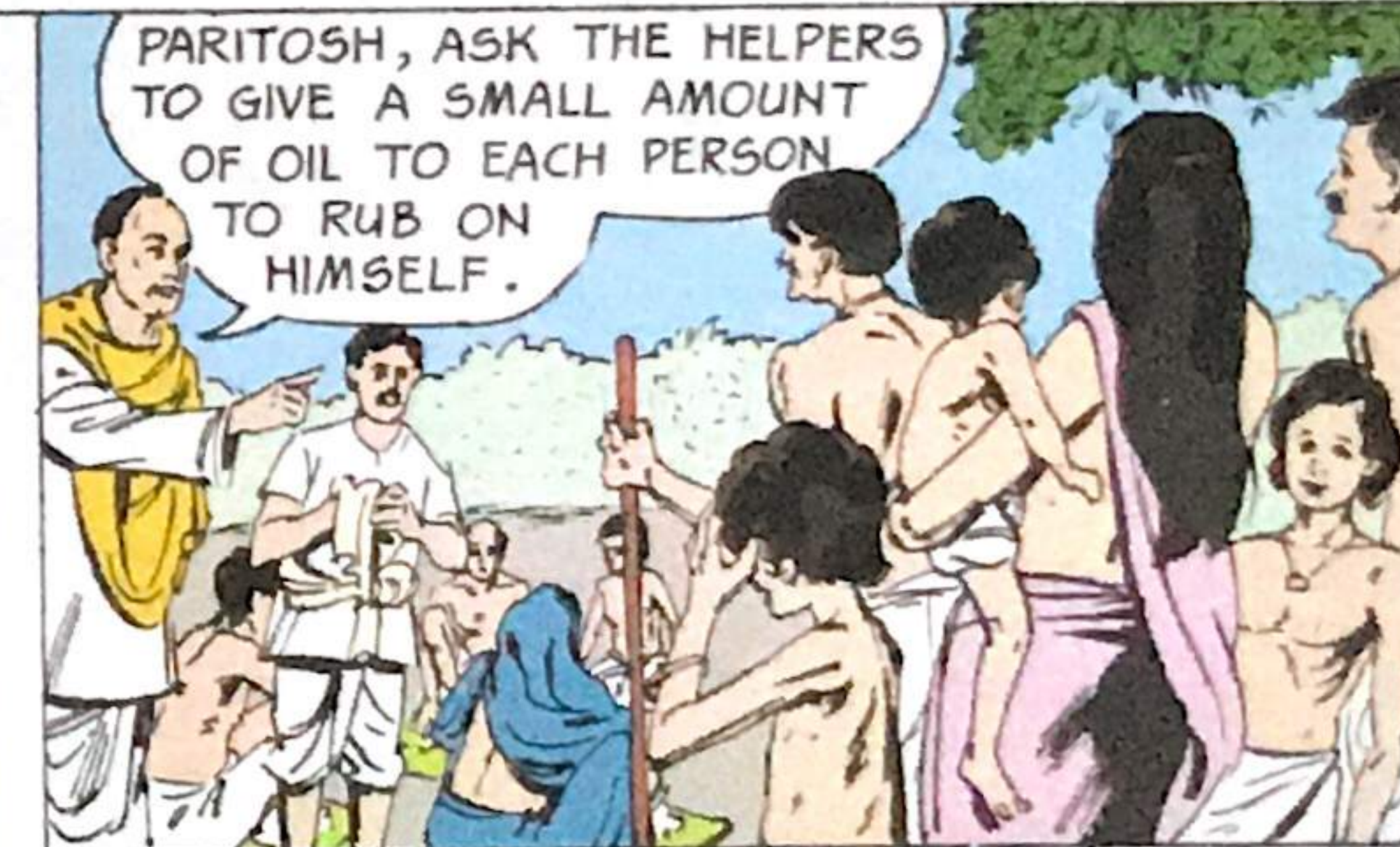


SIR, MORE AND MORE HUNGRY PEOPLE ARE ARRIVING.

LET THEM ALL COME. DO NOT TURN ANY ONE AWAY.



POOR SOULS. THEIR HAIR IS DRY AND THEIR SKINS PARCHED.

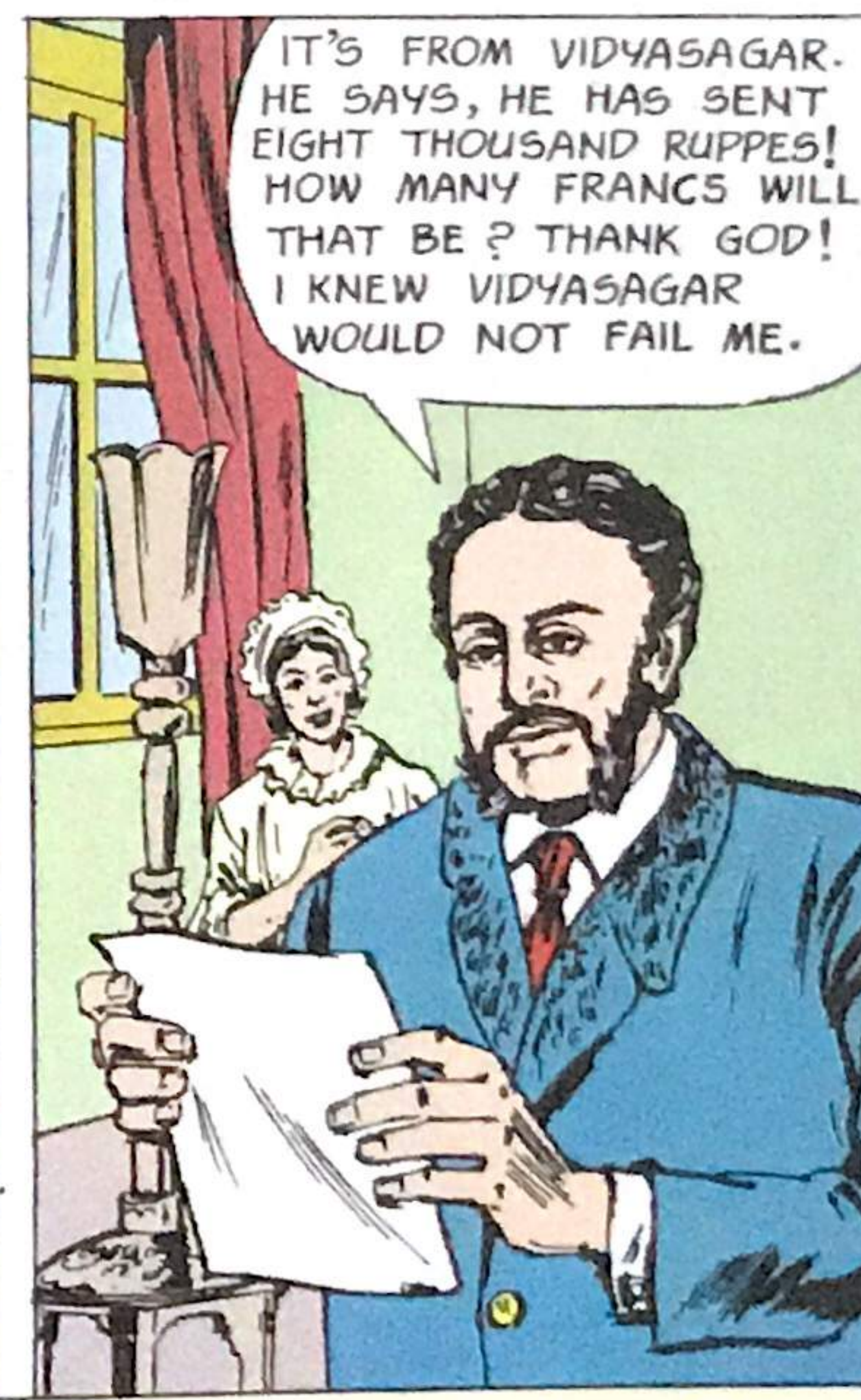
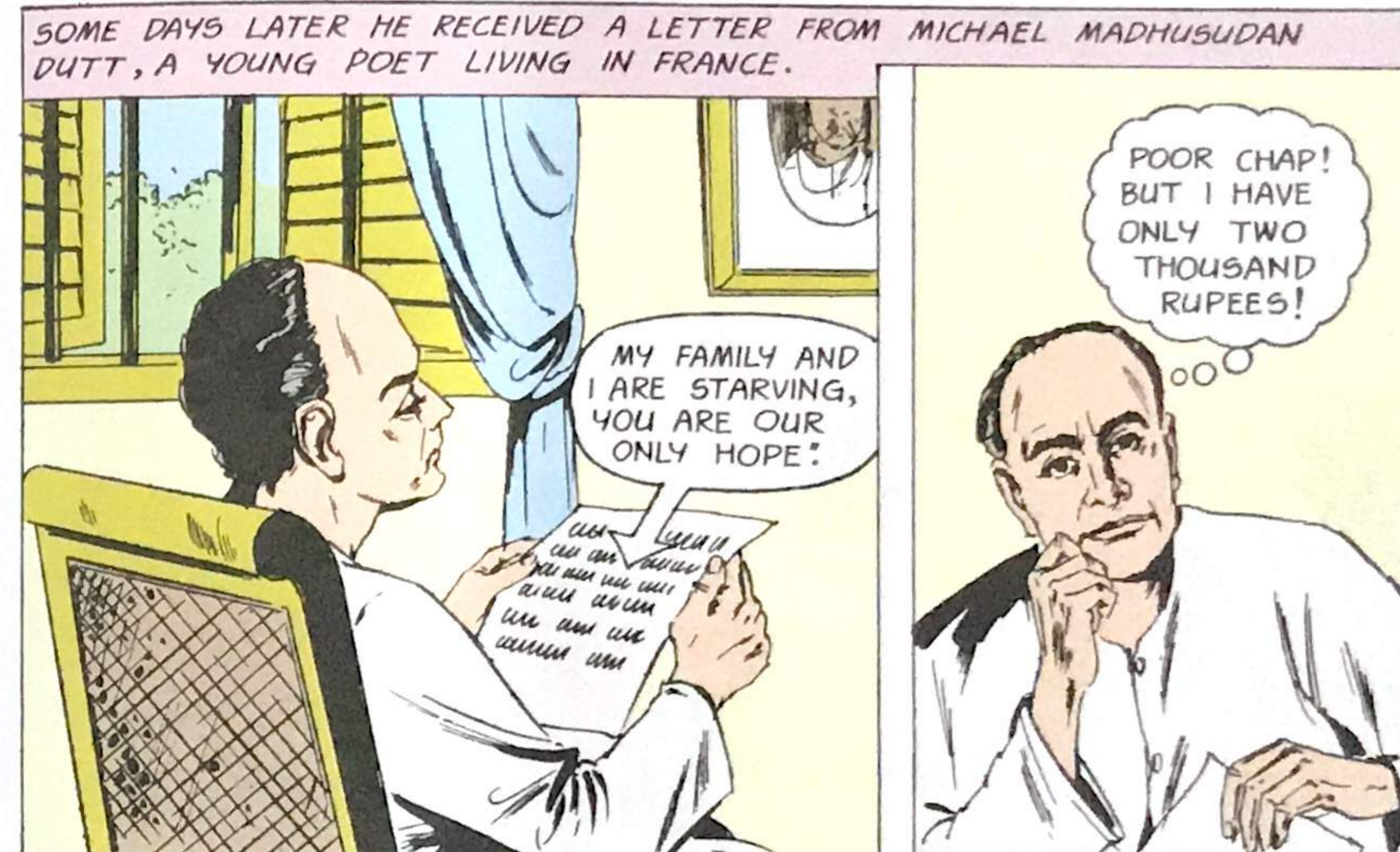
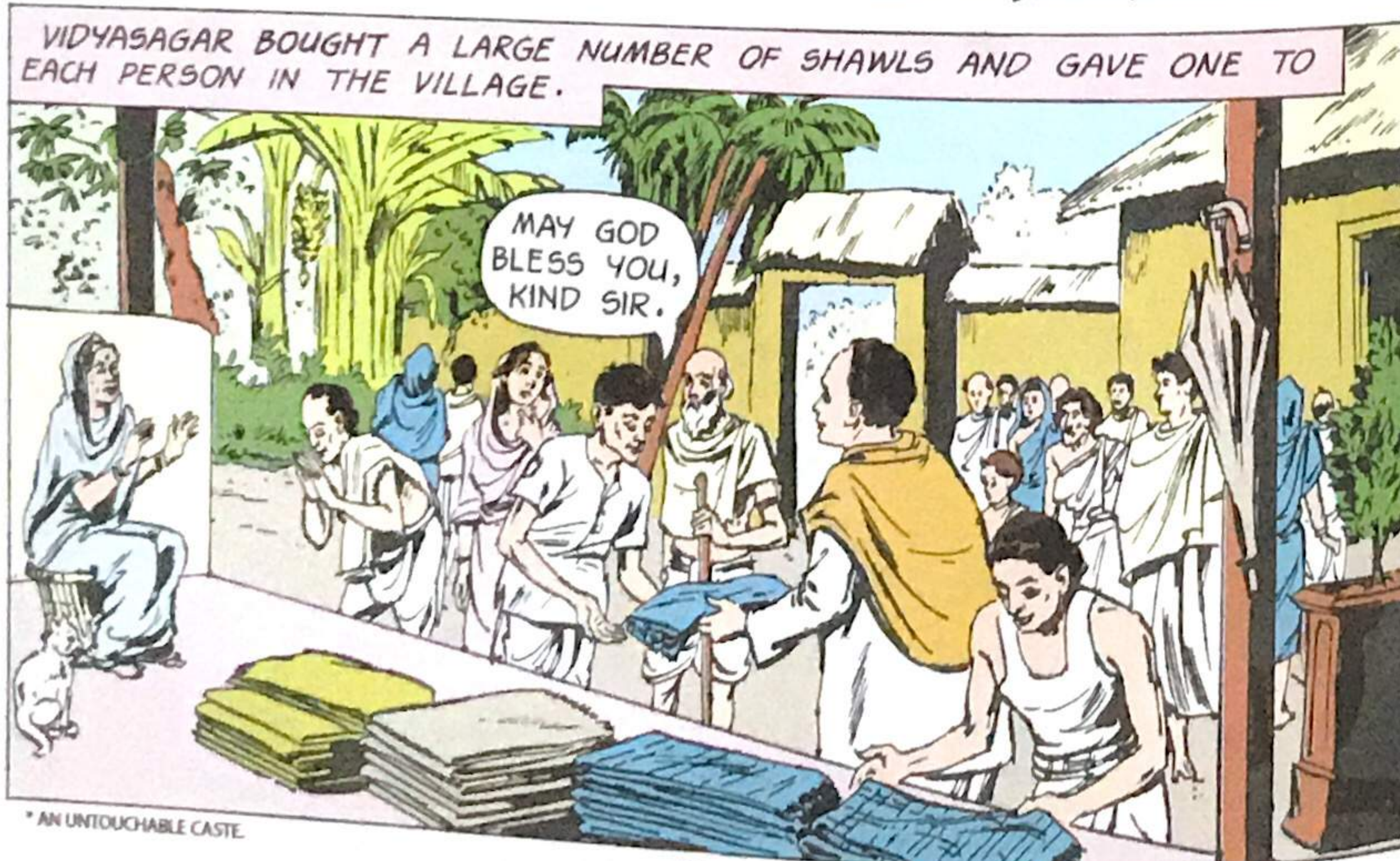
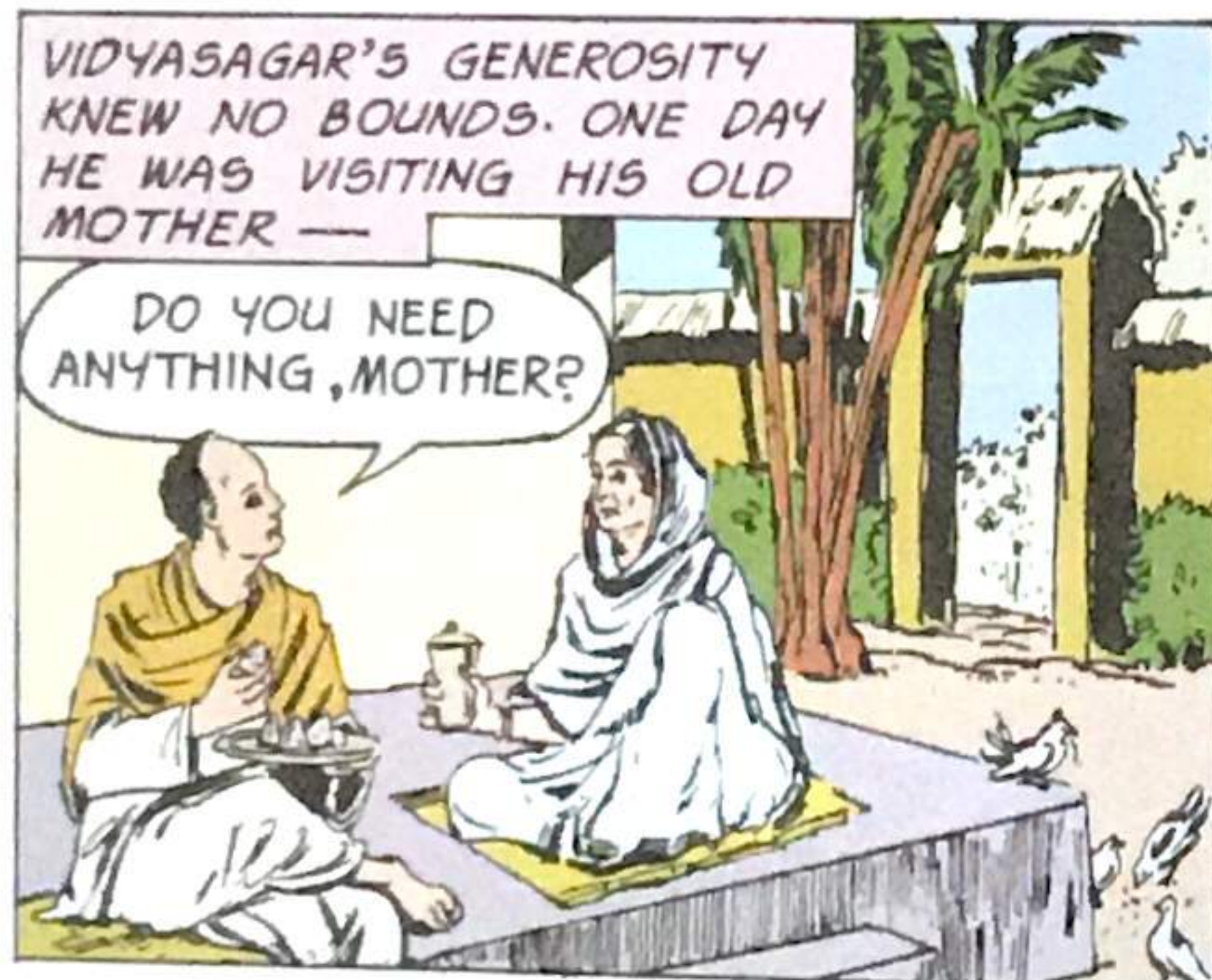
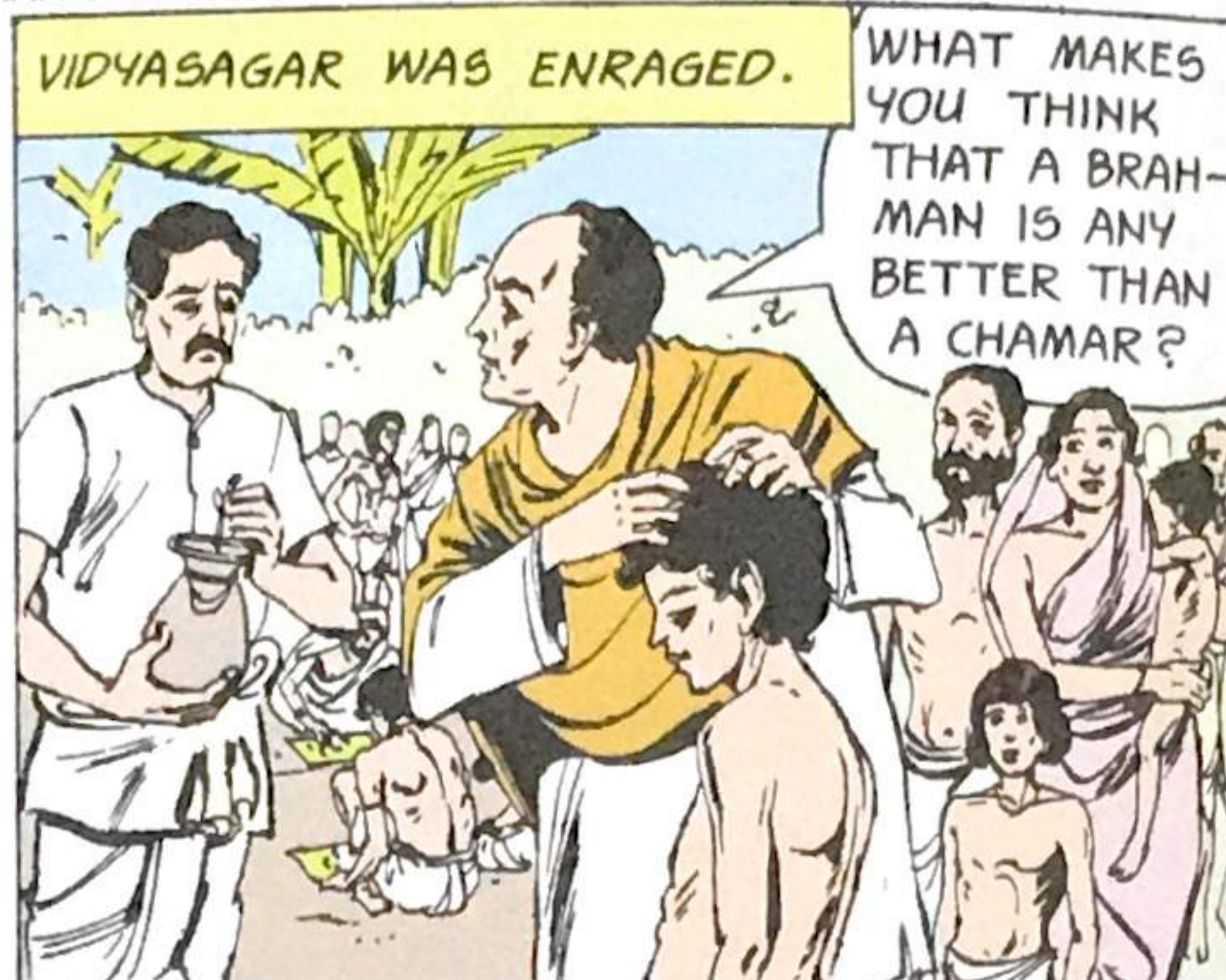
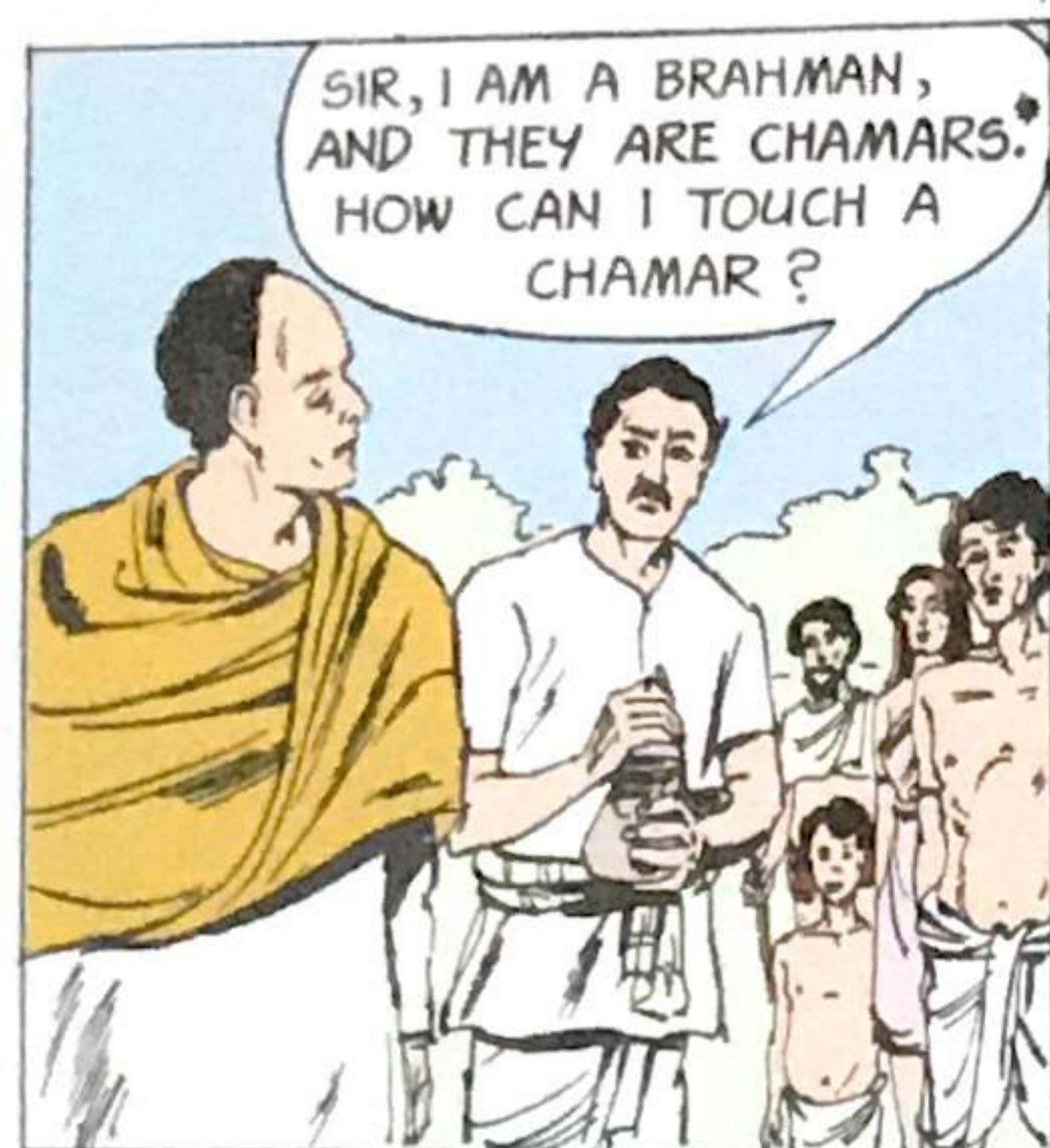


PARITOSH, ASK THE HELPERS TO GIVE A SMALL AMOUNT OF OIL TO EACH PERSON TO RUB ON HIMSELF.

WHILE THEY WERE CARRYING OUT HIS ORDERS—

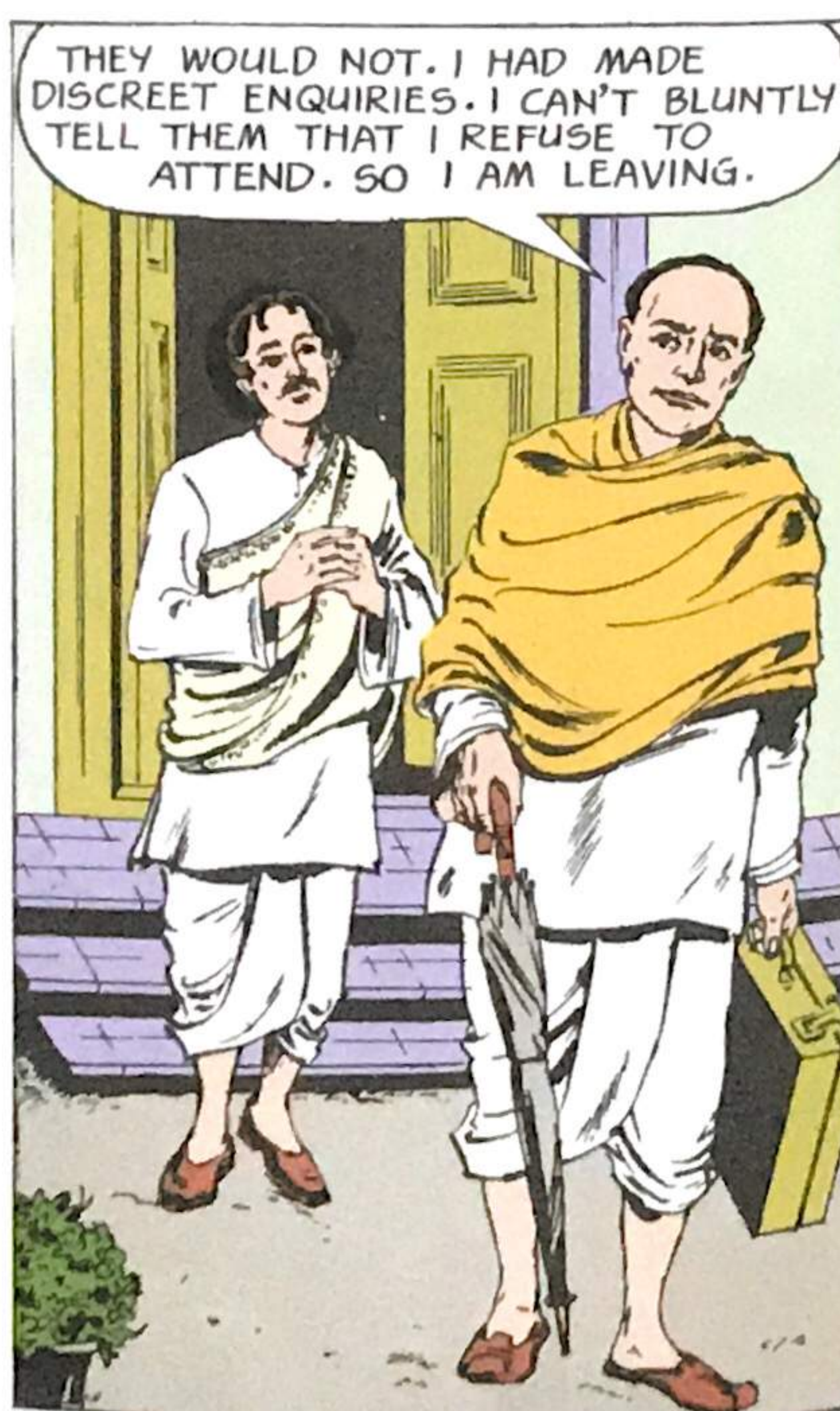
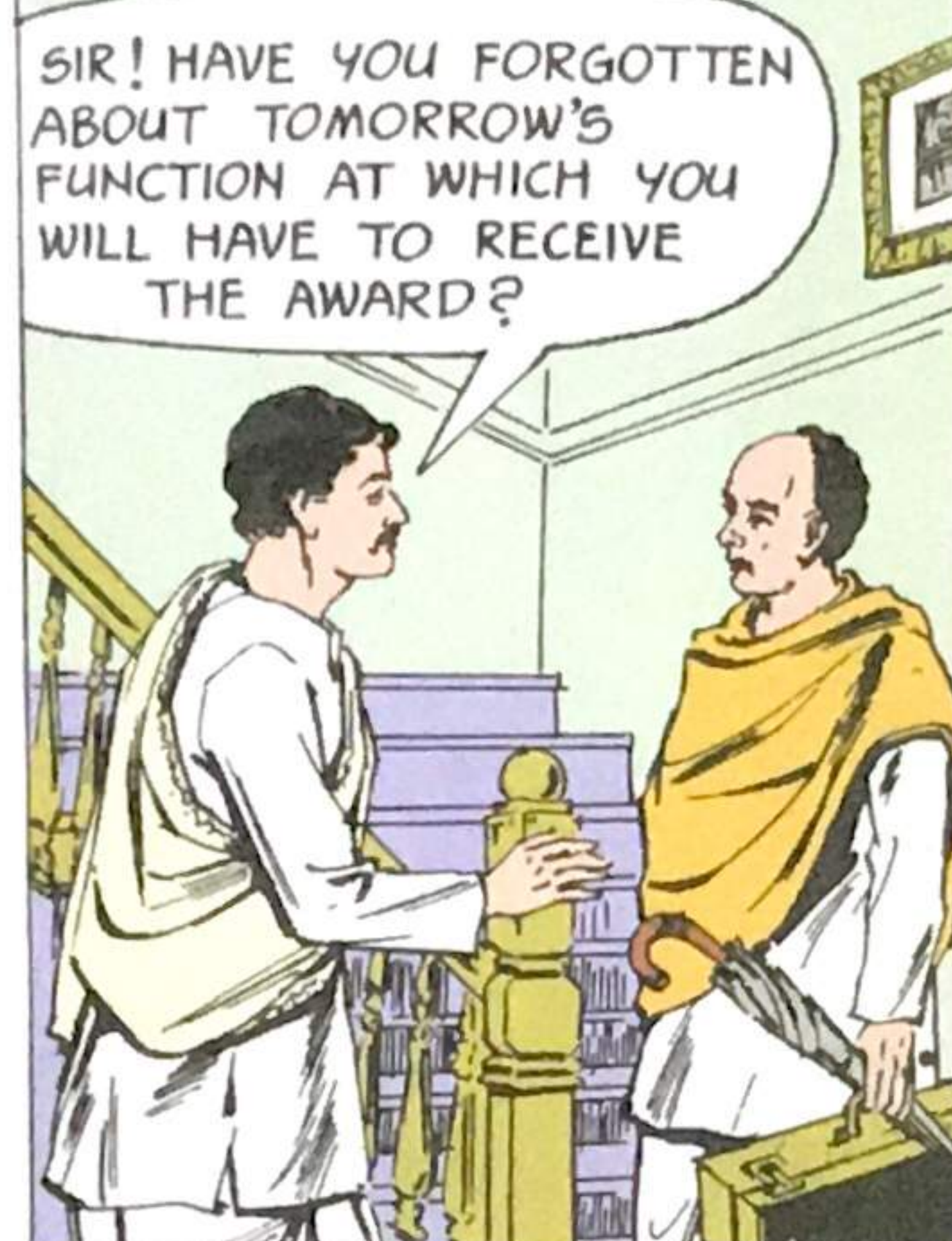
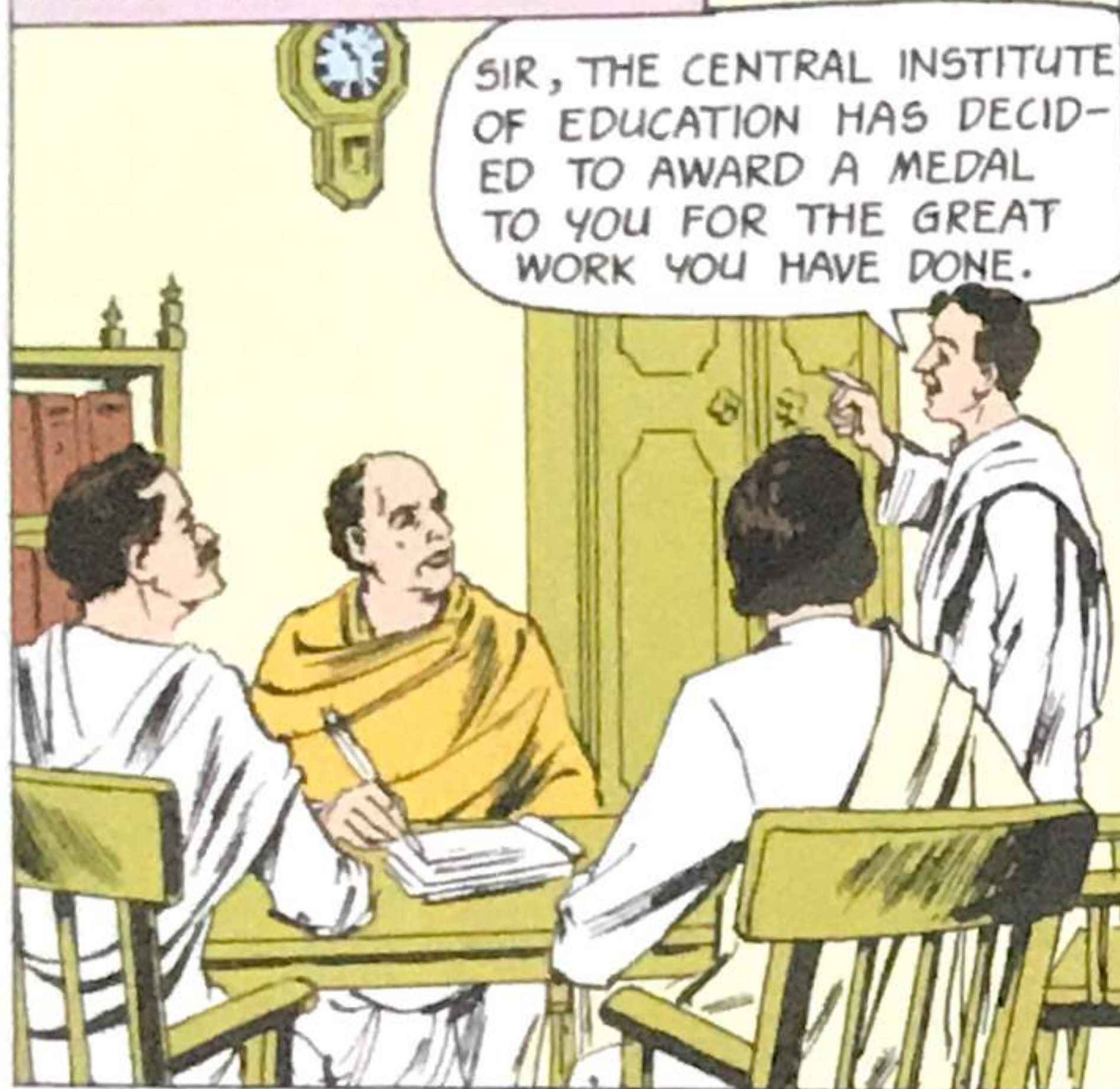


WHY DON'T YOU GO CLOSER? WHAT IS THE MATTER?

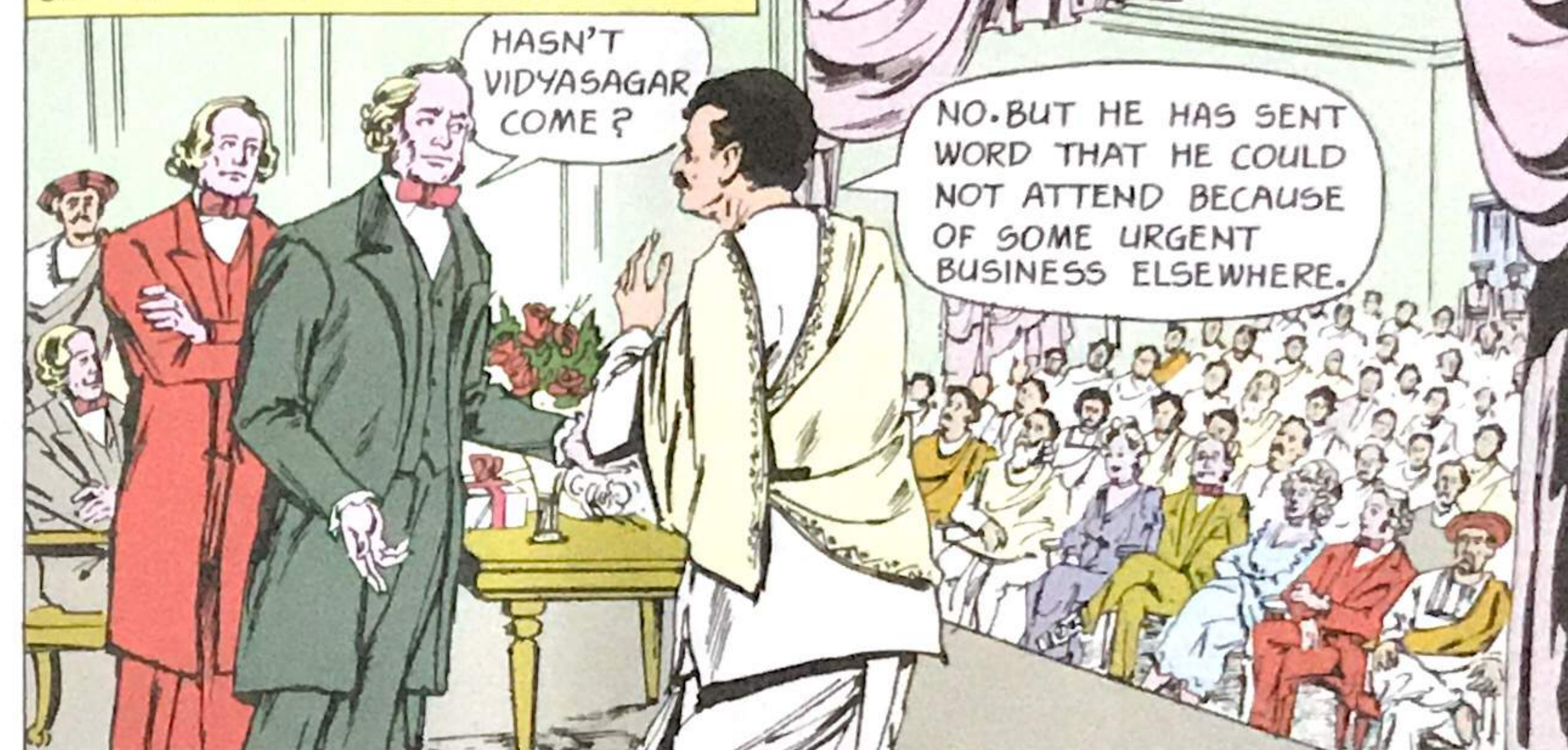


LATER, THE SAME MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT WAS TO REVOLUTIONISE THE FACE OF BENGALI POETRY.

VIDYASAGAR'S FAME SPREAD FAR AND WIDE. EVEN RAMAKRISHNA, THE GREAT SAGE, CAME TO SEE HIM. THERE WAS RECOGNITION OF HIS SOCIAL WORK TOO. ONE DAY —



ON THE DAY OF THE FUNCTION —



A FEW DAYS LATER, AT VIDYASAGAR'S HOUSE —



BUT VIDYASAGAR DID NOT REST ON HIS LAURELS. HE INTENSIFIED HIS DRIVE AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE AND CONTINUED HIS WORK IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION TILL THE VERY END. MILLIONS MOURNED HIS DEATH.

